

PROVINCETOWN ARTS

us \$10
canada \$14
volume 18
annual issue
2003/04

"I visualize the narrative of biography. As I was writing *Frida* I felt, if I had a movie camera, I would choose to stand and shoot from this corner of that room. Biography is an invention based on facts."

Hayden Herrera

ISBN 0-944854-45-1
ISSN 1053-5012

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Sid Grossman Provincetown, 1950's Vintage Gelatin Silver Print

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photo Frank Paulin, New York City



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OCTOBER 10 - NOVEMBER 3
"PEACEABLE KINGDOM"
GALLERY ARTISTS
AND INVITED GUESTS

*ESTATE



PETER HUTCHINSON, AUSTRALIAN DREAM, PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLAGE, MULTIMEDIA AND TEXT, 2000, 40" X 60"

Australian Dream

My friend Billy went to Australia and found my father, whom I had not seen since childhood, nor remembered. Although this meeting did not result in a reunion, somehow I made a connection with Australia, hence the Australian swans.

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JULIE HELLER GALLERY



TOP: Charles Green Shaw, *Waterfront*, oil on canvas, 1961

RIGHT: B.J.O. Nordfeldt, *At the Piano*, woodblock print, 1906

ABOVE: Milton Avery, *Umbrella by the Sea*, drypoint, 1948

A gallery dedicated to the artists who established Provincetown as an important art colony and to those who continue to carry on the tradition: Milton Avery, La Force Bailey*, Martin Barooshian, Harold Baumbach*, Douglas Brown*, George Elmer Browne, Peter Busa, Oliver Chaffee, W.M. Chase, Joseph Garlock*, Jan Gelb*, Nanno de Groot*, Joseph de Martini, Edwin Dickinson, Louise Freedman*, Maurice Freedman*, Charles Hawthorne, Charles Heinz, Henry Hensche, Hans Hofmann, Karl Knaths, Betty Lane*, Blanche Lazzell, Clare Leighton, William and Lucy L'Engle, Irving Marantz, Ethel Mars, Dimitry Merinoff*, Ross Moffett, Robert Motherwell, Jan Muller, B.J.O. Nordfeldt, Pauline Palmer, Patricia Phillips*, Alvin Ross, Charles Green Shaw, Maud Squire, Jack Tworckov, Abraham Walkowitz, Agnes Weinrich, John Whorf, Sol Wilson*, Marguerite and William Zorach, and others.

*ESTATE REPRESENTATION

NEW WORKS BY: Rose Basile, Bill Behnken, Peter Cameron, Michael Costello, David Eddy, Mary Giammarino, Mary Ann Goetz, David Halliday, Cherie Miffenthal, Christie Scheele, and Patrick Webb

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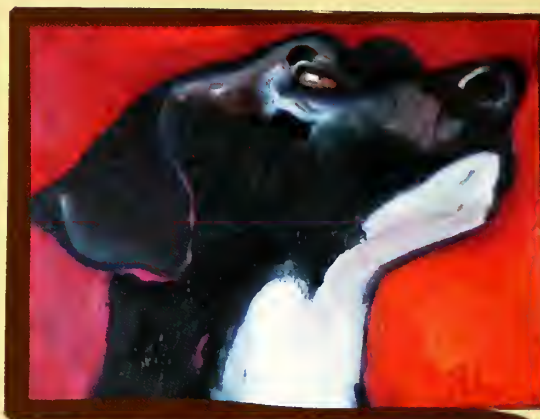
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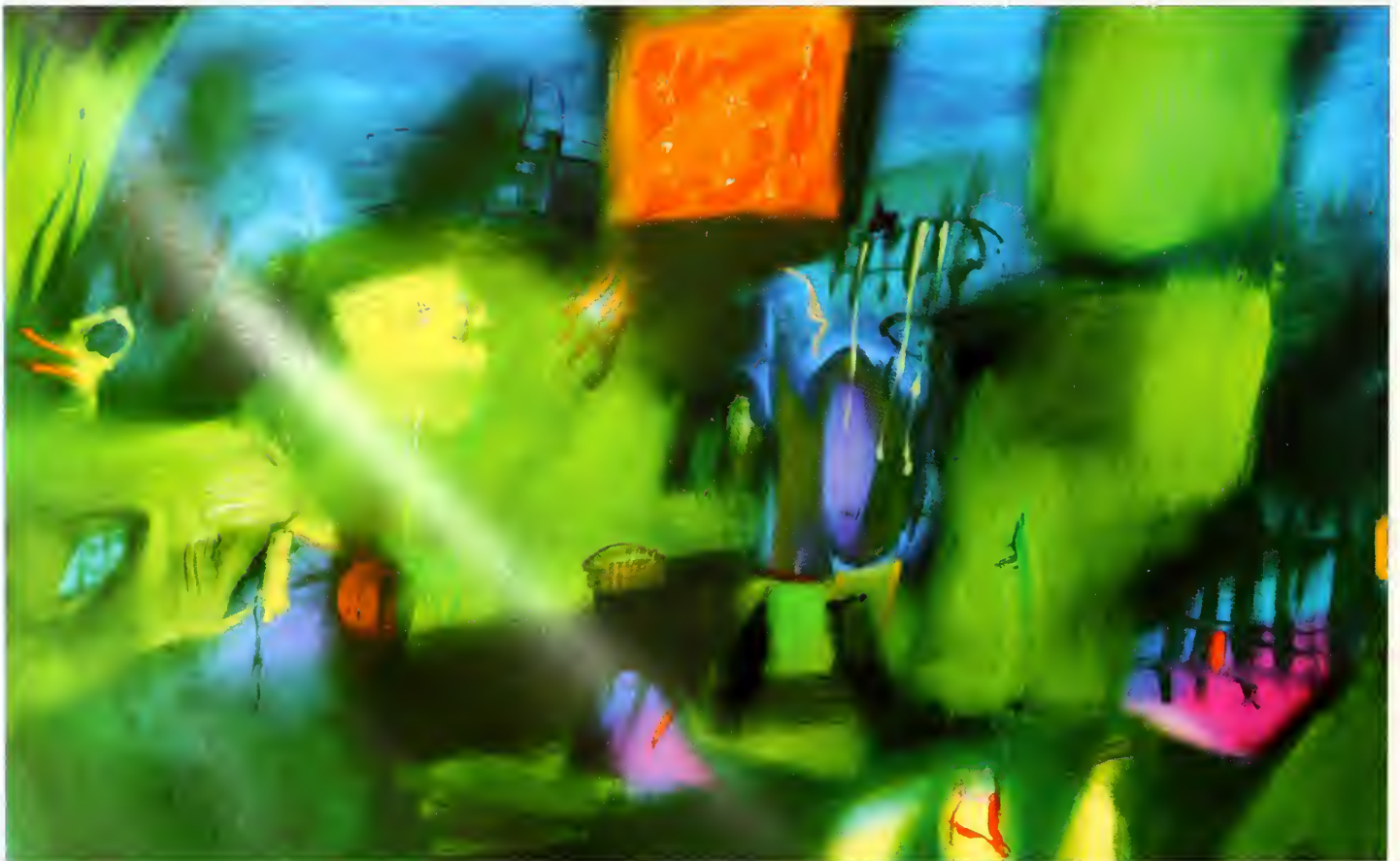


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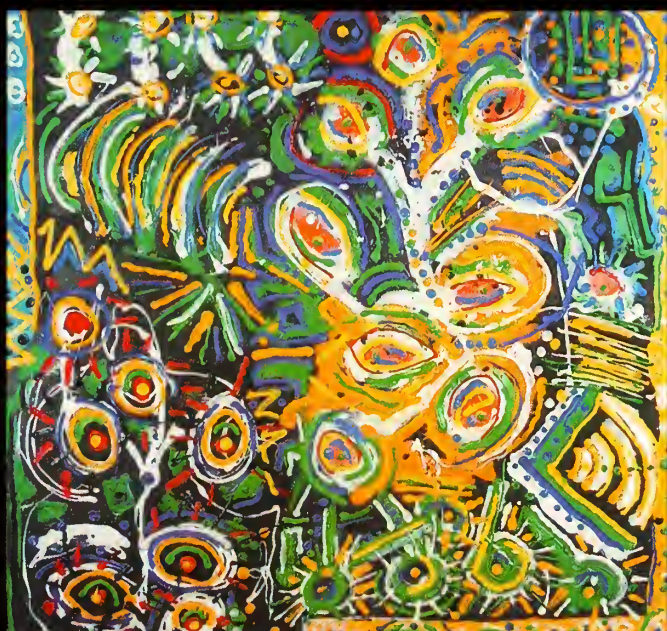
KATE NELSON

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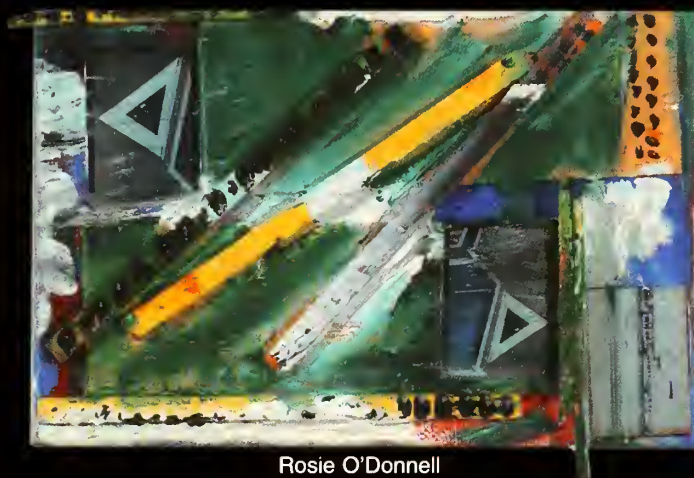
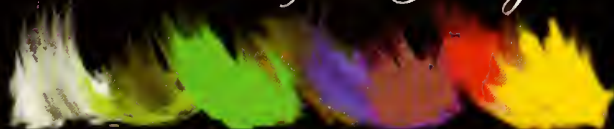
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"Beach Skiffs" 12x12 oil

Michael McGuire

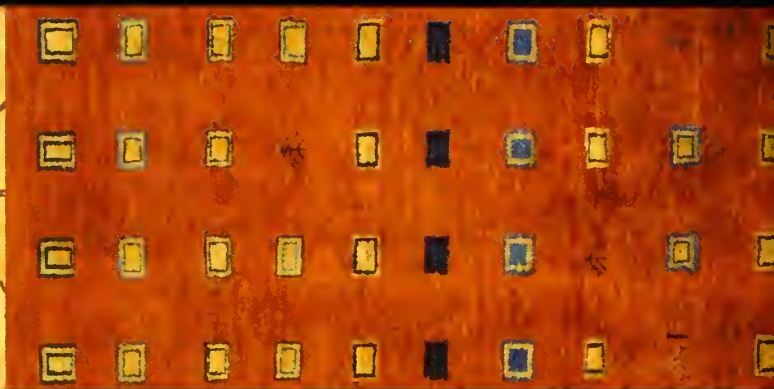
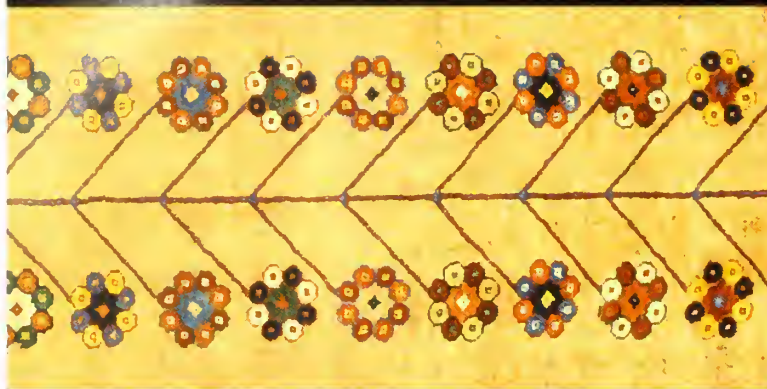
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Detail: artwork of Wally Richter, 16" x 20", oil on canvas

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Jia Lu "View of Heaven" oil on canvas

Passions Gallery

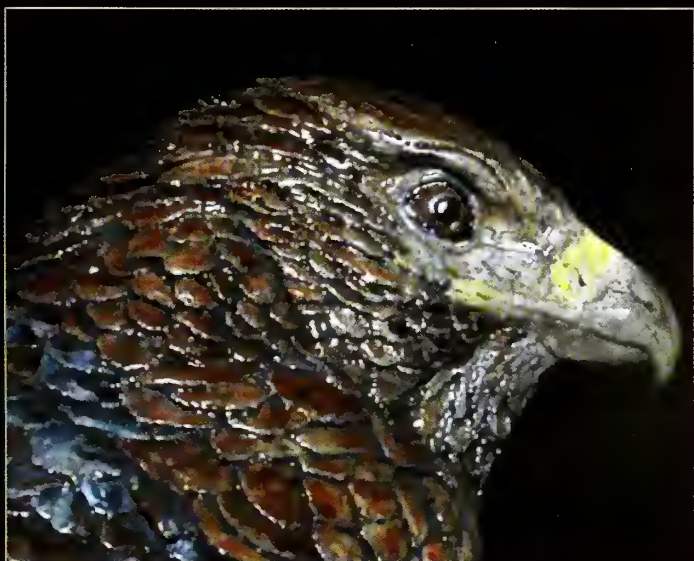
SHOW SCHEDULE 2003

JULY 18	NOEL & ROBERT KERNAGHAN
JULY 25	RAYMOND WIGER
AUGUST 1	COLETTE HÉBERT
AUGUST 8	JIA LU
AUGUST 15	FRED SZABRIES
AUGUST 22	VICTOR GADINO
AUGUST 29	BERNARD STANLEY HOYES

SUMMER HOURS - 11 AM - 11 PM

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CATHERINE CHAILLOU



Red Tail Hawk, enameled raku sculpture, Catherine Chaillou 2003

SUSANNE GREENE



The Wave & Woman Planter sculptures, clay & mixed media, Susanne Greene 2003

Françoise Frey

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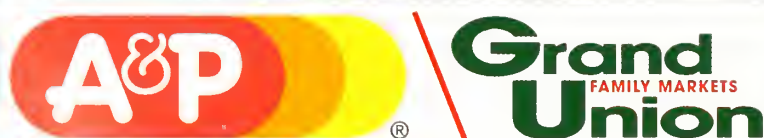
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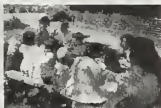
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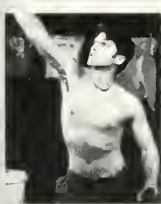
@ Highlands Center Picnic Grove at CCNS, North Truro-- Saturdays August 2, 16, 30--11-11:30 AM--FREE For the entire family! Call Box Office for directions



Skeeter & The Buzztones

Sunday, August 3

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Castle Hill Presents Tim Miller

Wednesday, August 6

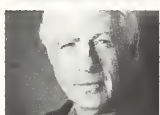
internationally renowned solo performer, in his latest, acclaimed show, *Body Blows*, Cape Cod Premiere, part of his 'Farewell Tour' - Payomet Exclusive--"...the effect is mesmerizing." *Los Angeles Times* + Book signing + Party



Willie (& The Po' Boys)

Friday, August 8

Bill Evaul, Bass; **Joe Bones**, Lead Vocals & Guitar; **Rick the Stick**, Lead Vocals & Guitar; **Peter Tighe**, Drums; **Sebastian Junger**, Harmonica. **Concert/Dancing**



What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

Saturday, August 9

Based on Selected Works of **Raymond Carver** & **Tess Gallagher**. Conceived & Presented by **Guy Strauss**



Stephen Kinzer

Sunday, August 10

Stephen Kinzer of *The New York Times*, talk on long-term dangers of interventions in faraway lands, based on his new book, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*. --Q & A + Book Signing



Bosoms And Neglect

Th/Fr/Sa/Su August 14-31

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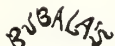
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2002	DISTINGUISHED SHORT STORIES OF 2001
1998	BEST AMERICAN MOVIE WRITING
1996	AMERICAN LITERARY MAGAZINE AWARDS: SPECIAL MENTION FOR DESIGN IN 1995
1995	PUSHCART PRIZE XX: BEST OF THE SMALL PRESSES
1994	AMERICAN LITERARY MAGAZINE AWARDS: FIRST PLACE FOR EDITORIAL CONTENT
1994	EDITOR'S CHOICE IV: ESSAYS FROM THE U.S. SMALL PRESS 1978-92
1994	NOTABLE ESSAYS OF 1993
1993	AMERICAN LITERARY MAGAZINE AWARDS: FIRST PLACE FOR EDITORIAL CONTENT
1993	BEST AMERICAN POETRY
1993	PUSHCART PRIZE XVIII: BEST OF THE SMALL PRESSES
1992	AMERICAN LITERARY MAGAZINE AWARDS: FIRST PLACE FOR EDITORIAL CONTENT & DESIGN
1991	BEST AMERICAN POETRY
1991	NOTABLE ESSAYS OF 1990
1989	PRINT CERTIFICATE OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE
1988	BEST AMERICAN ESSAYS
1986-99	OVER 100 PUSHCART NOMINATIONS FOR FICTION, NON-FICTION, AND POETRY

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Lore Kramer
Albert Kresch
Harriet & Richard Larsen
Robert Leaver
Joan Lebold Cohen
Donna & Michael Lennon
Anne-Marie Levine
Mike Liese
Betty Jean & Robert Jay Lifton
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Adlin Loud
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Arien Mack
Norman & Norris Mailer
Massachusetts Cultural Council
Hilary Masters
Gail & Michael Mazur
Richard McCann
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Joan McD Miller & Richard Miller
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Larry Millhofer
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Provincetown Arts 2003

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PROVINCETOWN ARTS

A publication of Provincetown Arts Press, Inc.,
a non-profit press for artists and poets

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MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM
JULY 12 - 8 pm



GAIL MAZUR
JULY 12 - 8 pm



NORMAN MAILER
JULY 20 - 8 pm



PAULA VOGEL
JULY 25 - 8 pm



ROBERT PINSKY
JULY 26 - 8 pm



STANLEY KUNITZ
AUGUST 2 - 8 pm



GRACE PALEY
AUGUST 10 - 8 pm



ALICE HOFFMAN
AUGUST 15 - 8 pm

Fine Arts Work Center

SUMMER 2003 in Provincetown

JUNE

Friday, June 13, 6-8pm

Opening Reception for the Cape Museum Exhibition, curated by Paul Resika

Exhibition Dates: June 11 - June 23

Monday, June 23, 8pm

Poet Robin Becker & Artist Peter Madden

Tuesday, June 24, 8pm

Writer Antonya Nelson & Artist Joel Janowitz

Wednesday, June 25, 8pm

Poet Marie Howe & Writer Richard McCann

Friday, June 27, 6-8pm

Opening Reception for the Michael Mazur & Gil Franklin Exhibition

Exhibition Dates: June 25 - July 14

Saturday, June 28, 8pm

Poet Melanie Braverman, Writer Paul Lisicky, Writer Jacqueline Woodson

Monday, June 30, 8pm

Poet Olga Broumas & Printmaker Bob Townsend

JULY

Tuesday, July 1, 8pm

Poet Cynthia Huntington & Photographer Marian Roth

Wednesday, July 2, 8pm

Writer Daniel Mueller & Poet Major Jackson

Saturday, July 5, 8pm

Slide Lecture by Michael Mazur & Gil Franklin

Monday, July 7, 8pm

Writer Frank X. Gaspar & Poet Carl Phillips

Tuesday, July 8, 8pm

Writer Dean Albarelli & Artist Paul Bowen

Wednesday, July 9, 8pm

Poet Mary Jo Bang & Artist Gerry Bergstein

Friday, July 11, 8pm

Writer William O'Rourke & Artist Thomas Nozkowski

Saturday, July 12, 8pm

Writer Michael Cunningham & Poet Gail Mazur

Monday, July 14, 8pm

Writer Elizabeth Strout & Artist Sue Miller

Tuesday, July 15, 8pm

Poet Michael Collier & Artist Andrew Mockler

Wednesday, July 16, 8pm

Writer Judith Grossman & Photographer Constantine Manos

Friday, July 18, 6-8pm

Opening Reception for 2003 FAWC Visual Arts Jury Exhibition

Exhibition Dates: July 16 - August 4

Friday, July 18, 8pm

Writer Philip Hoare

Saturday, July 19, 8pm

An Evening with Andrew Sullivan

Sunday, July 20, 8pm

Writer Norman Mailer

Monday, July 21, 8pm

Poet Catherine Bowman & Photographer Marian Roth

Tuesday, July 22, 8pm

Writer Victoria Redel & Artist Robert Henry

Wednesday, July 23, 8pm

Poet Martha Rhodes & Photographer Amy Arbus

Friday, July 25, 8pm

Playwright Paula Vogel

Saturday, July 26, 8pm

Poet Robert Pinsky

Sunday, July 27, 8pm

Writer & Comedian Kate Clinton

Monday, July 28, 8pm

Poet Thomas Sayers Ellis & Artist Lauren Ewing

Tuesday, July 29, 8pm

Writer Heidi Jon Schmidt & Artist Selina Trieff

Wednesday, July 30, 8pm

Writer David St. John, Writer David Updike, Artist Peik Larsen

AUGUST

Friday, August 1, 8pm

Looking at Art: A Discussion with Philip Yenawine

Saturday, August 2, 8pm

An Evening with Stanley Kunitz

Sunday, August 3, 8pm

Poet Mark Doty

Monday, August 4, 8pm

Poet Cleopatra Mathis & Artist Marjorie Portnow

Tuesday, August 5, 8pm

Writer Maria Flook & Artist Linda Bond

Wednesday, August 6, 8pm

Writer Jane Brox & Writer Liz Rosenberg

Friday, August 8, 6-8pm

Opening Reception for the FAWC 27th Annual Auction Exhibition

Exhibition Dates: August 6 - 16

Saturday, August 9, 8pm

Poet Rafael Campo, Writer Margot Livesey, Poet Mark Wunderlich

Sunday, August 10, 8pm

An Evening Commemorating the Grace Paley Fellowship with readings by Grace Paley & Friends

Monday, August 11, 8pm

Writer Marcie Hershman & Artist Michael David

Tuesday, August 12, 8pm

Writer Pam Houston, Poet Karen Craig, Artist Jim Peters

Wednesday, August 13, 8pm

Writer James Lecesne & Poet John Yau

Friday, August 15, 8pm

Writer Alice Hoffman

Saturday, August 16

27th Annual Auction - 6pm Cocktails, Dinner, Silent Auction - 8pm Live Auction

Monday, August 18, 8pm

Writer Michael Klein & Artist Bert Yarrow

Tuesday, August 19, 8pm

Writer Adam Haslett & Artist Jo Ann Jones

Wednesday, August 20, 8pm

Writer Matthew Klam & Poet Alan Shapiro

Friday, August 22, 6-8pm

Opening Reception for Denise Burge, Ohio Arts Council Fellow Exhibition

Exhibition Dates: August 19 - September 1

Friday, August 22, 8pm

Artist Salvatore Del Deo & Writer Josephine Del Deo

Saturday, August 23, 8pm

Poet Tom Sleigh & Poet C.D. Wright

Sunday, August 24, 8pm

Playwright Wendy Kesselman

Monday, August 25, 8pm

Writer Louise Rafkin & Artist Catherine Mosley

Tuesday, August 26, 8pm

Writer A.J. Verdelle & Artist Laura Lisbon

Wednesday, August 27, 8pm

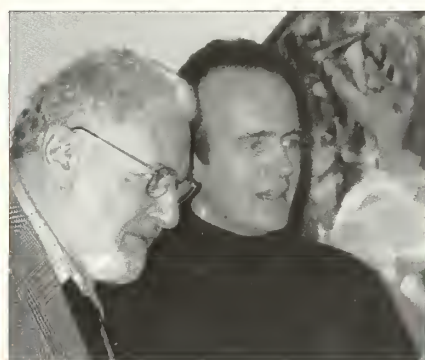
Writer Eileen Pollack & Poet Sonia Sanchez

Readings and slide talks take place in the Stanley Kunitz Common Room. Exhibitions and openings are held in the Hudson D. Walker Gallery. Both are located at 24 Pearl Street in Provincetown. There is a \$5 suggested donation for readings and slide talks. Contact the Fine Arts Work Center to confirm events

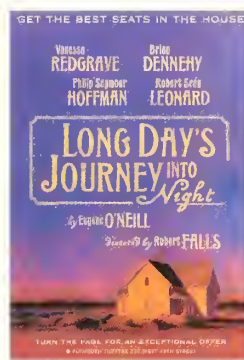
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ALBERT MEROLA WITH GREGORY LIND BEFORE THE OPENING OF "CHIAROSCURO" BY JAMES BALLA



PAUL RESIKA WITH DONALD BEAL AT THE OPENING OF BEAL'S NY SHOW



POSTER WITH ROBERT CARDINAL PAINTING



SOLSTICE BY RACHEL BROWN

Photographs by **Jules Aarons**, taken in Provincetown between 1949 and 1965, were exhibited this winter at the Boston Public Library. They show no nostalgia but reveal an eerie sense of the continued vitality of the art colony. A 1959 photograph offers a nighttime glimpse of **Red Grooms'** opening at the Sun Gallery. This era is depicted in a July show at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, featuring work then and now by artists who showed at the gallery, including **Mimi Gross, Alex Katz, Lester Johnson, Jan Muller, and Tony Vevers.**

Jon Arterton, the founder and musical arranger of *The Flirtations*, is one of the organizers of Great Music on Sundays at Five, offering 23 concerts this season in the acoustically blessed Universalist Meeting House in Provincetown. Performances feature the restored 1850 Holbrook Tracker organ and the restored 1928 Steinway Model B concert grand piano. See **John Thomas'** interview with **Paul Bisaccia** in this issue for more about music at the Meeting House.

James Balla, a painter with the Albert Merola Gallery in Provincetown, exhibited his paintings this winter at the Gregory Lind Gallery in San Francisco. This series, called "Chiaroscuro," made blacks and grays seem to bleed red blood.

Donald Beal made his debut in New York at the Prince Street Gallery, which, despite its SoHo street name, is located on West 25th Street. Paul Resika, one of Beal's teachers, came to look, along with a whole contingent from Provincetown; after the opening it was a short walk for food and drink and Sebastian Junger's hopping bar, *The Half-King*.

Rachel Brown learned the landscape of the Lower Cape through the lens of a camera, focusing more on landscape than people. She used to spend much of the year in Ireland, drawn to photograph two moments of eternal time: the winter and summer solstice. *Solstice* is the name of an elegant album of these elemental images, designed by Irene Lipton and praised in a foreword by **Mary Oliver**: "Turning the pages, I find myself thinking of photographs of great dancers, so chosen here seem the motions of the sea and the changes of weather." Prehistoric boulders appeared chalk white against blackened hills, aligned as straight as the stars in Orion's Belt. On

a rainy summer day, a cluster of bog cotton and tiny dots of white flowers run wildly along water's edge. Drops of rain, hitting the water, pool in widening circles, some small, the large ones breaking apart. These pictures seem natural in black and white, as if color did not exist in a world seen sub species aeternitas.

Robert Cardinal painting of a lonely Hopper-like house, hopped up with the radiant secondary colors that are the artist's contribution to the Hopper legacy, was chosen for the poster of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, produced this winter in New York at the Plymouth Theater. This summer the Provincetown Repertory Theater will produced a staged reading with **Norman Mailer** and his two sons, Michael and Stephen, both actors.

The fabric art of **Marilyn deRuyter** is among the 25 artisans who comprise the Whaler's Wharf Cooperative, re-structured heir to the burned-down building that fostered so many hand-crafters in town. Now unique items—glass etching, baby quilts, mermaid ceramics, painted wooden trays, Nantucket baskets—are located on the first floor between the rotunda and the ocean. On the third floor the complex provides individual studios to local artists at reduced rent. Painters, weavers, jewelers, and other one-of-a-kind mediums, open to the public for browsing or demonstrations.

Our favorite book by **Helen Duberstein**, poet, playwright, and novelist, is *The Shameless Old Lady*, but that does not stop her from further excursions in shameless behavior, such as her new novel, *Roma*, a tale that is an American version of *Tea with Mussolini*. Three women from New York spend a month in Rome, sharing an apartment and touring the ancient city. Each chapter is a tiny crisis, devastating each character one by one, a series of "little murders" in the phrase of Jules Pfeiffer. When the three ladies depart from their vacation, they are alive but altered.

Charles Ekberg's Vietnam War photographs, stored away for 35 years, are on view this summer at Schoolhouse Center. During the war Ekberg, an army clerk far from the front, desired to be closer to the actual fighting. He was an ex-art student from Colorado who bought a camera at the PX and set out on a long march during the Tet

offensive in 1968. He photographed soldiers who died seconds later.

Robert Finch is the naturalist we have looked to read since he started writing for local publications 40 years ago, telling us the names and life stories of the plants and terrain that surrounded us. His newest book, *Special Places on Cape Cod and the Islands*, guides us on walks through 24 locales he knows intimately. The excursions are accompanied by sharply observed scratchboard illustrations by Ellen LeBow. A railroad used to run down the spine of the Cape and Finch takes us to its final stop in Provincetown. Here he retraces on foot the old path, the rails removed, the ties retrieved, the sand dark with tiny chips of charcoal, discharged from the locomotives, the embers sometimes catching fire to patches of the woods. Crossing Snail Road, Finch arrives at Foss Woods, a 15-acre section surrounding the old railroad path and the first piece of town conservation land ever acquired since Provincetown's incorporation in 1727. "Perhaps a better way to view Foss Woods is to look at an aerial photo of Provincetown. Here one sees... a dense green belt of woodlands, ponds, and wetlands stretching from Herring Cove to Pilgrim Lake. It forms an important wildlife corridor between the harbor and dunes, and a significant habitat for migratory and breeding songbirds, particularly warblers."

Mary Frank was here in March to attend the opening of her exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. Originating at the University of Richmond, Virginia, the show will end in the fall at D.C. Moore Gallery in New York. A detailed essay by Martica Sawin in the catalogue shows us Frank's transition from sculpting in clay to making paintings that accommodates her need for relief. Indeed, the artist said, "I find myself standing on one side of the canvas as if I were working on a relief." In a notebook from the early '70s she asks, "Has anyone seen the power that turns the grasses green? What is the source of color? Its significance and power and rarity? Blind people in Persia ground pigment for weeks. In the Middle Ages nobody but royalty could wear purple. The preciousness of lapis lazuli—how much per virgin—the colors of paint being cities of Italy, Umbria, Sienna, Naples yellow. In Turkey, turquoise."

A collage of various images including a face, a person, and abstract patterns, with a large central image of a person's face.



HAYDEN HERRERA



PETER HUNT
PAINTED HUTCH



MICHAEL "MOON" HENRIQUE AT
THE OLD COLONY



AMY WHORF MCGUIGGAN



STEPHEN BORKOWSKI WITH THE FRENCH
AMBASSADOR ALAIN BRIOTTET

Hayden Herrera, our cover subject, will speak at Castle Hill Wednesday Evenings at the Wellfleet Library, July 15, about the life of Frida Kahlo, the subject of her groundbreaking book.

Jackie Houton remembered her formative years in Provincetown when she wrote her college entrance essay from her new home in Naples, Florida: "In the last hills of Truro, the air changes. I pity those who have never left the landlocked states of Kansas, Iowa, and Oklahoma. My amazing mother, who deserves stories told by Salinger, not my feeble scribbling, found a job on the Cape and we moved to Provincetown, a few days before my eighth birthday. The town's end-of-the-road ambience made it a Mecca for anyone who felt like they never quite fit. More than anywhere else, it is a place for pilgrims. In the children's art classes taught by **Elsbeth Halvorsen**, I spent many summer mornings up to my elbows in plaster. Her sinewy hands gave plaster a soul. Classes with **Olga Gee**, a hippie-artist who never grew up, were unpredictable. One day we would dress as pirates and parade down Commercial Street, another we would carve the faces of Greek gods into the pilings of the local pier, making totems. These are dreams of my past and I'll carry them wherever the future may lead me, hopefully to your beautiful college."

The life of **Peter Hunt** is turned into the legend he fostered in a new book by **Lynn Van Dine**, part novel, part history of the high class artist who painted folk-inspired patterns on any piece of table, tray, or wall that someone might commission. He invented his name and reinvented himself as a sort of aristocrat of peasant values. He explained his method to one admirer: "It's quite simple. Anyone can do it. I just think about what a piece of furniture would be used for, or where, or who would use it. Then I try to fill my heart with happiness before I start. That's the secret of the peasants in France and Sweden, you know. Decorations were always put on things they used. They did it for fun."

Anne-Marie Levine, whose first book of poetry was published by Provincetown Arts Press in 1994, has a second volume out from Pearl Editions. Robert Stein writes, "Levine's voice seems so spontaneous, so strong and direct, her intelligence so palpable, and her self-representation so

much of a performer that some readers may think her poetry just takes care of itself."

Mary Maxwell, a contributor to this issue and a member of our board of directors, spent time last summer at the American Academy in Rome as a visiting artist/scholar. Her husband, David Keller, is the son of Seymour Keller, scientist emeritus at IBM and a member of our advisory board.

Amy Whorf McGuiggan is author of *My Provincetown: Memories of a Cape Cod Childhood* (Commonwealth Editions). The book details the West End for children of the '50s and '60s, centering on the life around Sal's Restaurant and the West End Racing Club run by Flyer Santos: "The club, as everyone called it, was not what you think of when someone says yacht club. This was a community club that welcomed anyone who had the five-dollar membership fee and who pledged to abide by the Code of Ethics [Rule No. 8: "Compete for Fun"]. Tim and Mike Everett's younger brother, Toby, known affectionately as Nu Nu, was always there, never without his grape soda. The younger O'Donnell girls, Heidi and Amy, were there, as was Amy Germain. The children were its soul."

Wilfred Michaud, the founding president of the Club Richelieu in Boston, was honored with a memorial evening sponsored by the French Library and Cultural Center in Boston this spring. The French ambassador Alain Briottet provided an historical overview of the presence of Franco-Americans in New England. Of French Canadian descent, Michaud practiced law in Boston for two decades while making frequent trips to France to stay in touch with a widening circle of friends. He amassed a valuable collection of books written in French that he donated to the library. Michaud is survived by his partner, Stephen Borkowski, a member of the board of the directors of the Provincetown Arts Press.

Tim Miller, the performance artist who became famous as one of the NEA Four in 1990 who were awarded grants that Jesse Helms rescinded, is the co-founder of Performance Space 122 in New York and Highway Performance Space in Santa Monica, California. His new book *Body Blows* (University of Wisconsin Press) collects six of the scripts he has performed since 1987. In August he will give a workshop at

Castle Hill and a performance at the Payomet Tent based on *Body Blows*. "Blow means many things," Miller said, "including that queer bashers blow, as well as the sweet flowing breath of a lover tickling over the eyes, the blows on your body from a cop in Houston or San Francisco, in addition to the exquisite, gentle blow of two men's bodies coming together in love." Tony Kushner, author of *Angels in America*, says in his preface: "Tim Miller sings that song of the self that interrogates with explosive, exploding, subversive joy and freedom, the constitution and borderlines of selfhood. You don't think you need to hear such singing? You do!"

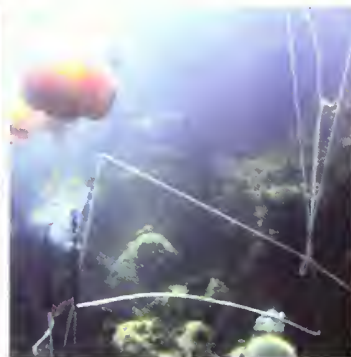
Cherie Mittenthal is the new director of Castle Hill Center for the Arts in Truro. Busy during the so-called dormant winter, she helped move printmaking equipment to a newly purchased building located near Truro Center. The plan is for "Pamet Crossing" to become a year-round facility for printmaking, Mittenthal's passion. **DNA Gallery** in Provincetown donated a Vandercook Letterpress for making small edition books, broadsides, and posters. Special events this summer: **Mary Gordon** occupies the Distinguished Artists and Writers Chair this summer and will read for her new novel in August. **Robert Storr**, a painter and former curator at the Museum of Modern Art, whose most recent exhibition is "Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting," will spend three days at Castle Hill, teaching a painting workshop.

Mike "Moon" Henrique died suddenly this spring. Yours truly saw him walking down Commercial Street toward his establishment, The Old Colony Bar. During the winter months in the '60s, the bar was closed so Moon bartended at Jack Sharkey's Sports Pub in Boston, a hangout for the Celtics. A friend from Naples, John Jay Gaffey writes "Can you imagine the reception her received in heaven from such departed O.C. regulars as Mel and Blue Enos Sr., Popeye and Helen, Ally Bally, Howard Slade, Iron Man, Burgundy, Dotty Alexander, Betty Patrick, Georgianna Cable, and Hoppy Hopkins, as well as a few of Moon's celebrity fans, Henry Morgan, Tony Perkins, and Fred Gwynn. Guard that jukebox up there, Mike!"

Louis Newman, curator at David Findlay Jr. Fine Art in New York, arranged this winter for ele-



JULIANNE MOORE WITH MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM. SEE PAGE 40.



CHRIS PEARSON AND PETER HUTCHINSON COLLABORATE ON ST. BARTS



ELIZABETH PEARL, *SPIRITUS*, OIL ON CANVAS



PETER McDONOUGH AND JIM RANN

giant exhibitions of work by Robert Beauchamp and Jim Fosberg. **Arthur Cohen** has an exhibition scheduled for this fall. Newman's partner, **Justin Ferate**, a well-known tour guide who formerly supervised Gray Line Tours in New York City, was the author of a new test for city licensing of guides. A typical question might ask for location of the present-day diamond district. Orthodox Jews, fleeing Amsterdam during World War II, were largely responsible for concentrating 80 percent of the world's diamond trade on a single block in New York on 47th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. But earlier, the diamond district was located on Canal Street and the area's jewelry shops are reminders of its past history.

Cindy Nickerson, director of the Cahoon Museum of Art in Cotuit, brings her extensive experience as an arts reporter for the *Cape Cod Times* to bear on the museum's mission of fostering American primitive art and furniture decorated with folk motifs. A large contingent from Provincetown was included in the 37 artists for a spring exhibition, "Freshly Painted Houses." Nickerson writes, "Cape Cod is a place where houses often seem to enhance the landscape, rather than interrupt it." Each artist commented on the work they exhibited. **Steven Kennedy** painted the Figurehead House in Provincetown, built in 1850 as the home of Captain Henry Cook near the corner of present-day Cook Street. Today it is a guesthouse painted the artist's favorite color, yellow. A carved and painted female figurehead, taken from the prow of a ship, is set atop the front porch of the house. "Now, as then," Kennedy said, "the figurehead of the woman is looking out to sea."

Ewa Nogiec's website, iamprovincetown.com, along with its print companion, is the expanded theme of a summer-long exhibition at the Provincetown Pilgrim Monument and Museum. Over 60 off-beat, authentic arrivals who stayed comprise the text, photos, videos, artifacts, and archival materials of a living history. **Mick Rudd**, co-curator with Nogiec and **Jeffory Morris**, said, "The truth is our Yankee sense of thrift has prevented us from discarding anything that has proven its durability. Today our past enjoys a secure place in our ever-turbulent present. The Pilgrim Monument casts a long shadow over the

town." We wish this extraordinary project would become an annual venue for retrieving archival material from the attics of our long-time citizens. A highlight of the show is the video of the town from the '40s, taken by **Lauren Richmond**, who now has a gallery named after him at the Art Association. His daughter, Lauren, discovered this material and found a way to remember it through her nose: "Our West End house greeted us with that distinctive smell old houses have when they have been closed for the winter—a mix of cedar, mothballs, salt air, and stillness. A familiar odor, always, welcoming. Once the windows were opened and comforters were aired on the clothesline, warm sunshine sweetened our room."

Elisabeth Pearl is the curator of "The Dog Show" (July at PAAM and October at the Public Library). The exhibitions celebrate the dog in art. It includes many noteworthy dogs by artists also noteworthy: **Susan Baker, Susan Barris, Donald Beal, Barbara Cohen, and Selina Trieff.**

Chris Pearson is an artist who works in the practical medium of stained glass, making beautiful windows for light to pass through. A traumatic experience he had years ago, assisting the conceptual artist, **Peter Hutchinson**, in a Caribbean underwater project, recently surfaced in his memory: "Peter, my friend of many years, asked me to join him on a holiday to the island of St. Barts. Since Peter had never learned to dive, I was to be the diver. I was to be his artist's assistant, a pleasant proposition, and I accepted. There would be weighted objects, floating objects, connecting elements, and some color for contrast in the murky water. He was possessed by an inner vision and I was trying to interpret it. I did my best to keep it simple by gathering components that were portable: plastic bags, fishing spinners, and various colors of parachute cord. St. Barts is more like an island in the Mediterranean than the Caribbean, more a garden than a steamy jungle place like Dominica. Mountainous, just a little on the dry side, and decidedly French. We toured the island in an open jeep, circling it several times as if it were a road rally. We practiced our snorkeling. Plastic bags filled with sand would provide anchors for all the elements. The parachute cord would connect everything. Other clear plastic bags would contain some water, sliced and diced red

tomatoes and some air to make it sort of like a balloon held aloft, only underwater. Peter had to double-check his cameras because he was about to invent a fragile instant in time that must be documented. Topless women were gathering at the other end of the beach. I positioned the anchors in a circle about 15 feet offshore. I dove down and looked. There was one problem: I depended too much on symmetry, making it look like a pavilion from the '65 Worlds Fair. Peter dove down and yanked one of the weights this way and another that way, adding a kind of natural disorder. My anxiety lifted. Beautiful without apparent purpose, the picture taking began. Peter was excited because fish had already taken up residence."

Jim Rann, hairdresser at Waves for 27 years, is also an artist who shows locally. Perhaps inspired by last year's *DNA* show of artist couples and the idea of collaborations, Rann started to compile his own list of couples. What follows is part of the list: **Dean Albarelli/Sara London, Cy Fried/Miriam Fried, Robert Henry/Selina Trieff, Paul Bowen/Pam Mandel, Mark Doty/Paul Lisicky, Janice Redman/Rob Dutoit, Donna Flax/Katherine Russo, Jim Rann/Peter McDonough, Jim Peters/Vicky Tomayko, Michael Mazur/Gail Mazur, Anne Lord/Conrad Malicoat, Bob Bailey/Breon Dunigan, Marion Roth/Mary DeAngelis, Bill Mann/Timothy Huber/Paul Resika/Blair Resika, Rob Westenberg/Rene LeBlanc, Kristine Hopkins/Donald Beal, Norris Church Mailer/Norman Mailer, Irene Lipton/Phil Smith, Tabitha Vevers/Daniel Ranelli, Heidi Jon Schmidt/Roger Skillings . . .** If you'd like to be included, drop by Waves.

Paul Resika's winter show at Salander-O'Reilly in New York received a remarkable review from Hilton Kramer in the *New York Observer*. The critic praised Resika's newest body of work for a special quality of temporal saturation that only a veteran of the art world could accomplish. These paintings seem tied in the lower left corner with the serpentine knot of a female form that opens up various isolated reveries of a mature artist. "It's a world with which the human mind is increasingly likely to be occupied as it ages," Kramer writes, "and begins the long travail of revisiting in the privacy of its own consciousness the scenery of past experiences. In that



FRANK SCHAEFFER, MARY J. MARTIN AND GORE VIDAL

HEIDI JON SCHMIDT

FREDERICK JUDGE WAUGH, *BREAKING SURF*

SHANE

world, reality is not always distinguishable from illusion, and chronology is suspended in favor of untamed juxtapositions of episodes and events that in real time appear unrelated."

Heidi Jon Schmidt's short story, published in *Provincetown Arts* in 2001, was selected by Sue Miller as a "Distinguished Story" in *Best American Short Stories 2002*. We re-read the story, "Wild Rice," finding acid and cruel truth about the life of the writer: "Reading a story," says one of her characters, a writing teacher, "is like taking a drop of rubbing alcohol on your tongue—at first it seems like nothing but when it starts to work, it curdles every cell."

Claire Sprague and **Irma Ruckstuhl** are curators of an innovative exhibition this summer at the Art Association that features four silversmiths active in Provincetown from the '40s to the '60s, a period in which American jewelry design was revolutionized in its materials. Four major jewelers lived in Provincetown: **Jules Brenner, Paul Lobel, Henry Steig, and Ed Weiner**. Each tended to forsake gold and diamonds and embrace forms that could be twisted and bent in silver, from geometric to biomorphic, abacus to mobiles. Several put pebbles or wood in their wearable work.

Gore Vidal was in town last fall to play the Devil in a staged reading with **Norman and Norris Mailer** in a wickedly funny adaptation of a Shaw play. He flew first-class from Rome to Boston. Delivered in a weary state to the White Horse Inn, the innkeeper, **Frank Schaeffer**, and his girlfriend, **Mary Martin**, sat with the exhausted author before showing him his room. Martin reports: "He slouched into the chesterfield as his right hand dangled a half-full wineglass over the carpet. It was wonderful to see. I was ready to jump at the suggestion of a spill, but no drop went to waste. A few weeks after he left, we decided to share the Laphroig Scotch he had left behind, enough for three healthy doses after Thanksgiving dinner. I proposed a toast to Vidal. One guest said, 'I don't know if there's anything of Vidal's worth reading aloud.' With that, the rocking chair that had been so hospitable split out from underneath him. The Scotch flew up in the air, emptying his glass. He didn't get a drop."

Frederick Waugh is subject of a retrospective this summer at the Cape Museum of Fine Arts,

curated by **Elizabeth Ives Hunter**. Waugh settled in Provincetown late in his career when he was already one of America's most successful marine painters. Waugh studied with Thomas Eakins in Philadelphia, then lived in Paris for two years before turning to the English coast of Sark, driven to paint the ocean breaking. Following the lead of George Bellows and Robert Henri, Waugh turned to the Maine coast to depict a violent concussion between a wall of water trying to crush solid rock. Waugh settled in Provincetown for his last two decades. Commercially successful, even during the

Depression, Waugh earned at least \$30,000 a year in sales. Something about the astute drama between the fury of water and resilience of rocks made the paintings popular. He owned a large house in the West End of Provincetown, outfitted with ship's timbers recovered from the back beaches. Wooden ribs of wrecked ships and the rib bones of whales provided structural supports for the studio, with its balcony, which was attached to the house. Waugh left the house to his son, Coulton. Hans Hofmann purchased the house, but that is another story.

Editor's Letter

We focus this year on the making of books into movies, including the curious corollary of how lives can be made into art.

Our cover features North Truro's Hayden Herrera, author of *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*, source of the movie with the story of how the Mexican Revolution and a tragic accident turned Kahlo into a uniquely triumphant artist. Two novels, made into movies by writers associated with Provincetown, amplify our theme: Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* and Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*, whose screenplay was written by Nicholas Meyer, an East End resident of many summers.

Like Salma Hayek, the beautiful Mexican actress who plays Frida, Andre Gregory has found a version of himself in the movie *My Dinner with Andre*. Gregory, a welcome washashore on our spit of land, sits down for a tete-a-tete with William J. Mann. Richard Kostelanetz, in his history of SoHo as an artist colony, begins with an epigraph by Harold Rosenberg: "Choosing a place to live has been for the American artist a problem of the first order." The spirit of place is always connected with locating and compressing experience. We say things "take place" as if experience were a location. Thus we pay tribute to this year's poetry editor, Gail Mazur, for the 29 years she has directed the very vital Blacksmith House Reading Series in Cambridge.

Twenty-nine years is a long time, we reflect, knowing that *Provincetown Arts* is only 18 years. Our mission is to spark creative activity. An entire community encourages our small staff to persevere, and their names are present in this issue. Irene Lipton designs the magazine and while she is working her wirehair terrier, Shane, stays by her ankles. At several of her most satisfying articles, you will find the likeness of Shane. Margaret Carroll-Bergman, being a mother, raising two daughters, knows easily how to publish a magazine. She became my boss because she earned the position. I know she would never fire me.

Chris



HA LIF

AYDEN HERRERA'S books seem written to be made into movies. They move from scene to scene, building up a picture with bits of information while isolating key points—in the manner of a spotlight focusing on an actor on the stage. Although she has published books on Matisse and Mary Frank, she is best known for her best-selling biography of Frida Kahlo, published by HarperCollins in 1983. Recently, Herrera recalled, "I felt that if I had a movie camera I would choose to stand and shoot in such and such a corner of the room. I often see written narrative as if it were a film. I imagine people moving around in a room or a garden. I certainly didn't expect my Kahlo biography to become a movie—it began as a dissertation. But once it was done, I thought it could be a good movie. I loved the movie my book became. It was extraordinarily beautiful to look at. The music was incredible. Salma Hayek is perhaps more beautiful than Frida and I feared her charm would substitute for Frida's toughness. But she was not overly sweet."

Every time the actress, Salma Hayek, strikingly dressed in every detail, appeared on camera she came forth as if framed in a painting. The movie succeeds well in showing the back and forth between the artist's work and her life, how the life sus-

YDREN

BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

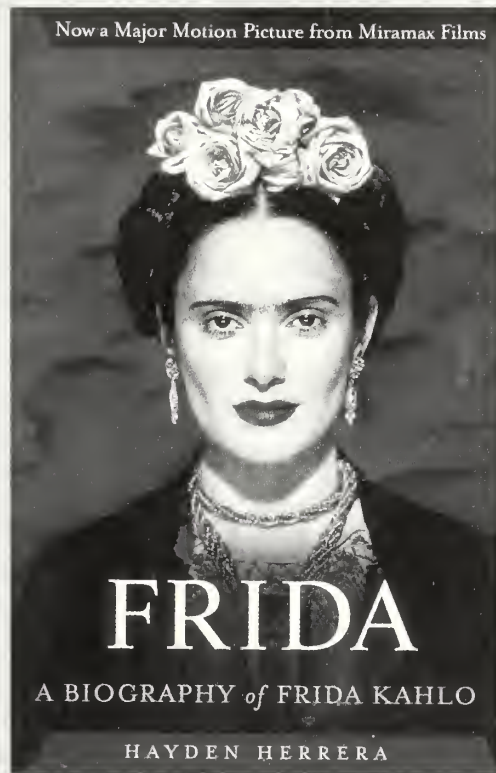
tains the work and the work remakes the life. The very struggle of the artist is shown as productive; in fact, the representation of struggle is the artist's victory over past defeats. The movie's mode of translating the paintings into animated scenes from life was adopted from the example in Herrera's book, where paintings are described as the exquisite psychological offerings selected from the mess of life.

There is abundant use of the word *perhaps* in Herrera's newest biography, *Arshile Gorky: His Life and Work* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). One cannot be sure that an image in one of Gorky's paintings is any one thing at any one time. Herrera told me in an interview for this article: "A shape could be a rabbit, it could be a man, it could be an easel. The imagery is multiple. It's harder to write about Gorky than about Frida Kahlo because he's abstract or semi-abstract. He insisted upon ambiguity. How does one write, in a direct and forceful way, about ambiguity? With Frida, it was very clear. Her imagery is straightforward. Her work records her life. All artists work from their life, but with an abstract artist it is more difficult to pinpoint the connection in graceful writing, which I do care about."

In negotiating an artist's life study, Herrera structures her books chronologically, but in both biographies the need was to show the reader, at the onset, the character of the artist. Towards the end of writing *Frida*, Herrera discovered a way to mirror the last chapter in a prologue. She did the same thing in *Gorky*. The book begins with a prologue where the artist smells smoke and thinks it is his cigarette, not his studio, that is on fire. In the case of *Gorky*, Herrera's need was to establish who Gorky was as an artist before she took you through the horrors of his Armenian childhood.

Having finished most of her research for her Gorky biography, Herrera was unable to figure out how to begin writing. One day she was sitting on a beach on Cape Cod with Mary Gordon and her husband, the biographer Arthur Cash. Mary said to Herrera, "Hayden, why haven't you started the biography?" Herrera understood that when one is asked a direct question, one had the privilege of blurting out the truth. She answered, "Because I don't know how to *structure* it! I don't know how to retrieve all the material I've gone through and thought about. I don't know how to *scoop* it up."

Arthur said two words: "Index cards." Herrera remembered that that was exactly what she had



done with Frida. She had structured the narrative by using index cards. For Gorky she had hoped she could do without these props. She thought the story should come out of her head the way fiction would come out of her head. But she could not make it happen and she finally went back and put Gorky's whole chronology on index cards.

Despite these factual underpinnings, Herrera's writing practice is a little closer to Abstract Expressionism. She takes a plunge and finds out where she is going once she starts. "Biography," she says, "is an invention based on facts. The writer selects and organizes the facts so as to give the fullest possible picture of his or her subject. There is always a huge amount that we cannot know. The biographer has to follow hunches, use judgment, and hope that the picture created is close to the truth. In a way, writing a biography is like getting to know a friend—you can't know everything. That's why we gather anecdotes about our subject and put them together like brushstrokes. In putting down the brushstrokes, we come to feel we understand. With Frida, I felt, for a time, that I was living inside her. I felt I was writing about her from the inside out."

From Linda Nochlin, the feminist art histor-

ian, who taught at the City University of New York, Herrera learned a freewheeling method of structuring essays. Nochlin saw that some students were afraid of writing and Herrera remembered her advice: "Don't try to make a linear outline. Just take a piece of paper and put everything down that you think you want to say. Then just draw lines between the ideas, and figure out which one is going to be first."

Looking at the paintings themselves (or reproductions) generates almost all Herrera's ideas about Gorky and Kahlo's art. She believes in keeping images right in front of her while writing. "You know, Ethel Schwabacher borrowed Gorky's paintings in order to write her monograph on him [*Arshile Gorky*, 1957]. That's the best way to write." At the same time the concept of milieu is crucial to Herrera in providing the context in which art is produced. Gorky was a non-native speaker and when he spoke his voice sounded more poetic than native poets. His *apercus* became folklore: "He left out definite and indefinite articles and transformed words the way he transformed shapes," Herrera says. "His malapropisms sounded like metaphors." Stuart Davis, Gorky's close friend, said Gorky's "complex personal jive" was "no simple matter of a foreign accent, although that was present, but an earthquake-like effect on sentence structure and a savagely perverse use of words to mean something they didn't."

He was a tall, handsome fellow known for his succession of beautiful studios, always kept spare. He scrubbed the wooden floors with bleach and loved to pace barefoot on the immaculate surface. His eyes were round and brown. His drooping moustache smiled more than his mouth. Herrera suggests that "the wary, wounded, angry look we see in Gorky's self-portraits may have something to do with thwarted love." Something changed in 1943 when Gorky began visiting his wife's family in Virginia. He was more secure, emotionally and financially. Not only was he married, but also he was making love to the woman he loved—his wife. In a few short years they produced two daughters, Maro and Natasha. Following years of apprenticeship, Gorky now forgot his mentors and studied nature with the innocence of a child. As he had done on his mother's apron, he put his face in the grass and looked sideways, his eyes half-closed, looking at and through the embroidery, formed by blades of living grass, toward something beyond.

Frida drew crudely while Gorky drew like an

LEFT: HAYDEN AT HER NORTH TRURO HOME.
PHOTO BY BRAD FOWLER

angel. For all the damage to her body, she knew nothing about drawing anatomy. If Gorky departed from anatomy, dismembering, relocating, reassembling, he knew the organic source that organized what he would accept as a drawing by Gorky. Gorky did not say his first word until he was six years old. He did not know why and we do not know why. But his late development in speaking does parallel his extended apprenticeship in painting, suggesting a need beyond mere knowledge. Gorky borrowed from artists he respected before the word "borrow" had been translated into the postmodern vocabulary of "appropriation." Perhaps what defines our moment is that people now absorb the history of art in a frank way. Previously, to be original meant that it was bad to borrow. But the rule could be broken. T. S. Eliot wrote that "immature poets imitate, mature poets steal." That's what Picasso did when he went to Braque's studio. He declared his ambition the way a rival would claim another's love object, insisting his need was greater. When critics dismissed Gorky's painting as derivative, he would amiably agree: "Yes, Cézanne is my father and Picasso is my mother."

FRIDA

As a schoolgirl in Mexico City, Frida was a tomboy who enjoyed enlivening dull moments with impish pranks. At the prestigious National Preparatory School, where the country's future diplomats were bred, she and a few members of her intelligently rebellious circle arranged to ride a donkey through the halls.

At this time, the early '20s, Mexico's most famous artist, Diego Rivera, was commissioned to paint a mural in the school's auditorium. Frida had an instinct for attracting notice; she got her future husband's attention by calling him "Old Fatso" while he was up on the scaffold absorbed painting muses. The auditorium was off-limits, but Frida found access, ate from the artist's lunch basket, and even met the beautiful model, Lupe Marin, whom Rivera would marry before he married Frida. Rivera was obese but moved with amazing grace. He was a fat person who danced beautifully, as if he carried his partner in his being. If Frida planned to have Diego's baby, she was simultaneously very passionately aligned with the leader of her school's circle of friends, Alejandro Arias.

Frida's youthful enchantment was interrupted by a terrible accident. Buses, new to Mexico, were crammed with crowds who had deserted the obsolete trolleys. Herrera writes in her biography: "Then, as now, they were driven with torador bravado, as if the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe dangling near the front window made the driver invincible." Frida and Alejandro were packed in a bus along with a workman carrying a bag of gold dust used in church restoration. A collision threw everybody together. When Alejandro became aware, he saw Frida, bloody and bleeding. Her clothes were torn off, but her body was glittering with gold dust, mixed in with the blood. People, thinking she



FRIDA'S DRAWING OF HER ACCIDENT. OPPOSITE PAGE: "A FEW SMALL NIPS."

was an injured dancer, screamed, *La Bailarina!*

Frida later wrote about the accident: "It is a lie that one is aware of the crash, a lie that one cries. In me there were no tears. The crash bounced us forward and a handrail pierced me the way a sword pierces a bull. A man saw me having a tremendous hemorrhage." The man knelt on Frida's body and pulled out the rod of iron that had pierced the very middle of her body. Just then, the Red Cross ambulance arrived; people said Frida's scream was louder than the siren. "The steel handrail," Herrera writes, "had literally skewered her body at the level of the abdomen; entering on the left side, it had come out through her vagina." Her lower lumbar column was broken in three places. "I lost my virginity," Frida said.

She made drawings in her journals and wrote down what the drawings meant to her. The drawings were a riddle that could be resolved through the writing and the writing was a way to make the drawings clearer. Her paintings were the picture album of her life, but her journals were a way of working out the ideas that came to fruition in her paintings. Once married, she would show and tell the drama of keeping Diego in love with Frida. A school classmate described her early doodling: "the lines meet among themselves and after two or three sinuous arcs she made them meet again." Frida's big round penmanship is childlike and earnest. Her drawing is awkward and honest, compelling. It was when her bones were healing in a plaster cast that Frida began drawing on this virgin white surface. She tattooed not her body but the medium that bound her body. Painting was becoming the way to record the joy—the *alegría*—she needed to balance the constant pain in her life.

She had always loved nature. Now she loved it more. She had always loved animals. Now she loved them more. Her monkeys and parrots, the flowers and bees in her garden, all this immediate life came alive in her art. She lived for nearly three

decades after her accident and she lived every day with a passion controlled by love.

"As she recovered, relapsed, recovered again," Herrera writes, "she invented herself. She created a person who could be mobile and make mischief in her imagination rather than with her legs." Frida created the person who would paint the paintings. A secret had been revealed and the knowledge altered her. "It is as if I learned everything in seconds," she said. "I became old in instants."

Frida's mode of self-presentation became the model she used for her paintings. She was her own subject. Her Tehuana costumes became a motif, devoid of the person who wore them, yet shaped by the memory of that person, just as shoes retain the shape of their owner's feet. Frida's blouses and long, ruffled skirts; her look, at once simple and elegant, raw and refined, was enhanced by clunky stone Pre-Columbian jewelry. She invented hairstyles. Her bows, clips, and combs were as functionally beautiful and intimate as her bandages and braces.

In 1929 Frida did marry Diego, but, starting with a miscarriage in Detroit in 1932, all her efforts to have children resulted in failure. In Detroit, she recovered and immediately set about documenting her sufferings in art. From Detroit, she and Diego went to New York, where Rivera was commissioned to paint a mural at Rockefeller Center. "They were thrown into the city," Herrera writes, "like revolutionaries in the temple of finance."

In New York Frida spent little time painting. She visited with friends, went to movies, and spent a lot of time shopping. Otherwise, she became indolent. In eight months she produced one painting. She watched Diego paint on the scaffold while she "sucked hard candies." Herrera adds, "Another pastime was the game of *cadañre exquis* [exquisite corpse], an old parlor game

adopted by the Surrealists as a technique to explore the mystique of accident. The first player starts by drawing the top of a body and then folds the paper so that the next player draws the next section without seeing how the figure has been begun. When Frida was a player, the resulting monsters were hilarious. She had a lurid imagination, and her fascination with sexual organs, also seen in the drawings in her journal and in a number of paintings, burst forth in the exquisite corpses." Frida was bad. One player recalls, "Some made me blush, and I do not blush easily." She would show an enormous penis, dripping with semen. When they unfolded the paper, they found a well-dressed woman with big bosoms, until they got to the penis. Diego laughed and said, "You know, women are far more pornographic than men."

Diego was working long hours on the Rockefeller mural, under the watchful eye of the New York press. Before the world, he succeeded in altering the portrait of an anonymous "labor leader" into a likeness of Lenin. Nelson Rockefeller wrote a letter to Diego, expressing his concern that a portrait of Lenin would "seriously offend a great many people." Rivera was tormented by a moral dilemma. He offered a compromise: he would balance the head of Lenin with the head of Lincoln, whom he described as the American hero of the laborer. Rockefeller came to the site with a check for \$14,000, the balance due on Rivera's contract. Rivera accepted the check, but the fat man who walked with "liquid grace" now "walked woodenly to the work shack and changed out of his overalls. More guards appeared and pushed the moveable scaffold away from the wall. Within half an hour Radio City personnel had covered the mural with tarpaper."

Back in Mexico after four years in San Francisco, Detroit, and New York, Diego and Frida moved into separate houses, connected by a

bridge. The bridge was a deep metaphor that appeared in Frida's work as a thin line linking her to the nourishment of ancestry. The thin line was the extended umbilical cord, a linkage that connected the dead to the living, as a woman's blood vessels sustained an unborn child in her womb. Roots of plants in her paintings became fuses that blossomed into colors exposed in bright sunlight. Frida would pick bunches of bougainvillea, fixing the stems in her hair. Now, with a mirror, she would begin to paint a self-portrait that exposed her will to endure and her reverence for life—her *alegría*.

When Diego, after painting a portrait of Frida's younger sister, Cristina, posing her as an allegorical nude, proceeded to consummate his visual contact with intimate contact, Frida simply cut her long hair short. Her husband had so loved her long hair and she was glad to hurt him. Also she ceased to wear the native costumes that he thought Mexican women should wear in order not to pander to European style. Too angry to speak directly, Frida found a persona in a portrait called "A Few Small Nips." The painting is inspired by a newspaper report of a drunken man who threw his girlfriend on a cot and stabbed her 20 times. In the courtroom, he stated, "but I only gave her a few small nips." Herrera writes, "In the painting we are presented with the immediate aftermath of the murder: the killer, holding a bloody dagger, looms over his dead victim, who lies sprawled on a bed, her naked flesh covered with bloody gashes. As if the small sheet of tin cannot contain the horror, splashes of blood spurt onto the painting's frame, becoming life-size red splashes. The impact on the viewer is immediate, almost physical. We feel that someone in our actual space—perhaps oneself—has committed this violence. The transition from fiction to reality is made by a trail of blood."

Frida was highly sexual and she felt no shame

about bisexual affairs, however discreetly she kept them. Herrera cautions us not to over-emphasize Frida's lesbianism. If Frida was boyish, she drove men crazy. Her lesbianism, Herrera writes, is suggested in her double portraits: "It emerges in many of her paintings as a kind of atmosphere, a sensuality so deep that it was stripped of conventional sexual polarities, a hunger for intimacy so urgent that it ignored gender. Like Picasso, who is reported to have said that the intensity of his friendship with the poet Max Jacob made him able to imagine making love to him in order to know him more completely, Frida, when she loved someone, wanted the absolute connection of physical union."

Diego was untroubled by his wife's female flings, but he flew into fury when he was confronted with indirect knowledge of her heterosexual affairs. Frida's retort was to schedule a major exhibition of her work in New York at the Julien Levy Gallery. Andre Breton was ecstatic in his catalogue preface: "This art even contains that drop of cruelty and humor uniquely capable of blending the rare effective powers that compound together to form the philter that is Mexico's secret." Her art was the drug that made Diego fall in love with her.

In the movie, Frida, based on Herrera's biography, Frida, bedridden, a few months from death and ordered by her doctor not to attend the opening of her first retrospective in Mexico, arrives in an ambulance, the siren quieting the buzzing crowd. Her four-poster bed is set up in the gallery and she is carried in and placed in the bed, creating a spectacle that is too serious to be Surrealist. Diego, in the movie, says so well at this occasion what he actually wrote later: "I recommend her to you not as a husband, but as an enthusiastic admirer of her work, acid and tender, hard as steel and delicate and fine as a butterfly's wing, loveable as a beautiful smile, and profound and cruel as the bitterness of life." He knew from the beginning and he said at her end, "If I had died without knowing her, I would have died without knowing what a real woman was."

Rivera saw Kahlo's art as specifically feminine. Herrera agrees. It is precisely, she says, "Kahlo's insistence on the concrete and personal that distinguishes her from the Surrealists. The Surrealists invented images of threatened sexuality. Frida made images of her own ruined reproductive system. When in "Roots" (1943) she joined her own body with a green vine, she was communicating a specific personal feeling—a childless woman's longing for fertility. Her emotion is utterly clear. Eroticism ran more through Frida's veins than in her head—for her, sex was less Freudian mystification than a fact of life. Similarly, she did not need the tutoring of de Sade to depict with a frankness that verged on ferocity the drama of physical suffering. This bluntness contrasts in the strongest fashion with Surrealist indirection and ellipses."

GORKY

In January 1946 Gorky's rented studio in the Connecticut countryside caught fire and 27



major works, produced at the height of his power, were destroyed. He had been preparing a new show for his dealer in New York, Julien Levy, whose prestigious gallery was located on 57th Street. The fire started when Gorky's red-hot stovepipe, not insulated, ignited a nearby beam of dry wood. Gorky, confused, wondered if his first obligation was to save the owner's tools or his own paintings. He ran back and forth fetching water with a bucket, trying to douse the flames. The barn owner heard the *cri de coeur* that Gorky murmured, almost *so sotto voce*, while running up and down the hill, *Studio on fire!*

During this trauma Gorky may have been mesmerized by the memory and family tales of the massacres of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey. Frida said of her traumatic joust with a steel handrail, "it is a lie that one cries." Just so, Gorky's memories, familiar to his friends, seem to have been burnt into his consciousness even before he was born. His future manner of drawing depended on his early use of his hands and his discovery of the power of their facility. De Kooning described Gorky's habit of sharpening his pencil when a belligerent Pollock insulted him. Gorky handled his pencil as if it were a "surgical instrument," de Kooning said. Gorky performed dissections between past, present, and future, insuring that his shapes, like layering in anatomical studies, have been "elevated spiritually," meaning that a part had been separated from the whole or an object from its context. Gorky's shapes, derived from nature, retrieved through a haze of memory, strive to be representational, yet they are disguised or camouflaged in dazzle patterns of figure/ground confusion.

Gorky's maternal grandmother was made a widow when her husband, a priest, was nailed to his church door. Gorky's mother, Shushan, married for the first time when she was 14, not uncommon in turn-of-the-century Armenia. She quickly had two daughters. Two years later she heard thumping at her door. Two Turks pushed her husband into his own house, his hands bound, and the Turks shouting, "Christian dog!" The Turks took out a knife and began to flay him. He was blood-soaked when the Turks pushed his face in front of Shushan, pulling her eyelids up so she would be forced to see her husband suffer. Doubtless, she was raped.

Three years later Shushan married a widower who lived in a small farming village near Lake Van. An ancient destination, a mile above sea level, south of Mt. Ararat, Turkey's largest mountain, Lake Van is known for the light-infused pastel colors of the water, caused by its high salt content, seven times saltier than the ocean. The



GORKY IN HIS STUDIO IN 1935. BELOW: "TO PROJECT, TO CONJURE." FROM ARSHILE GORKY: HIS LIFE AND WORK (COURTESY FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX).

landscape is barren of trees but abundant with wildflowers and many species of birds. The stem and avian forms of Gorky's later work have their origin here.

(The recent movie, *Ararat*, directed by the Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan, focuses on the Armenian genocide, but it includes moments in Gorky's childhood and his reliving it years later when he painted "The Artist and His Mother" (1926-36). It also includes an art historian whose expertise is Gorky's work.)

At the end of the day, the young Gorky would rest with his head cradled in his mother's white apron. One of her aprons was embroidered and Gorky remembered falling asleep to her stories as his eyes closed on the patterns that hemmed the apron. In 1919 Gorky's mother, age 39, died of

hunger. Gorky was an 18-year-old orphan, except he had a father, separated by an ocean, who lived in Providence, Rhode Island. Money was sent for Gorky and his younger sister's passage. Two decades later, Gorky remarked that he was amazed, when he first came to America, that a barking dog in the old country sounded the same as a barking dog in the new country. In Russian the name "Gorky" means "bitter one." In America, Gorky took the last name because he greatly admired Maxim Gorky, editor of an anthology of Armenian poetry whom he pretended was his cousin.

When he was a boy, Gorky painted Easter eggs so skillfully that people in the village

paid him to paint their eggs. Intricate flowers, birds, and trees appeared, making somersaults like a weave in an Oriental carpet. The money he made painting Easter eggs, he used to buy paper and pencils. During the worst days of the Depression in America, Gorky possessed a cache of linen, drawing paper, stretchers, boxed tubes of paint, and well-cleaned, top-quality brushes grouped by size and placed in coffee cans like quivers of sorted arrows. He is said to have taken his first name from the Greek warrior Achilles, who was mortally wounded by an arrow in a vulnerable tendon.

Instinctively, Gorky took it upon himself to turn his life into legend. He changed dates. He changed names. He changed travel destinations and fibbed about attending the Rhode Island



School of Design in Providence. Newly arrived in America, he hardly spoke English. Later, he wrote love letters to his wife by copying the sentiments of others. He was so shameless in his plagiarism that it is obvious that Gorky the foreigner was only innocently seeking suitable English to say what was available to any native speaker. Following the same logic, Gorky apprenticed himself to a succession of modern masters—Ingres, Cézanne, Picasso, Miro—until, when he married Mougouch and spent a succession of summers in the Virginia countryside, he began to paint Gorkys. He came back one afternoon with a drawing, asking Mougouch, Have I done something crazy here?

Three years later, in February 1946, one month after the studio fire, Gorky was operated upon for colon cancer. The doctors negotiated the elimination of his bowels via an exit created on one side of his body near his stomach. Gorky and Mougouch were living in Sherman, Connecticut. In July the Gorky family went to spend their third summer in Virginia. The following summer in June, Mougouch left New York for the coast of Maine, taking her young daughters, Maro and Natasha, with her. Mougouch welcomed the separation because it offered relief from Gorky's dark depression.

Late in the summer of '47, Gorky left New York and visited Mougouch in Maine for five days. They picnicked. They conversed about art. Gorky drew and helped his wife with drawing. "I have a drawing that's partly by me and partly by Gorky," Mougouch said. "He explained to me how everything in your picture has to be in relation to something through tension, a relationship of tension between whatever part of the object you were looking at—say a part of a tree—and something equally strong, like a cloud. I can't describe it, but at the time I was quite aware of it. Suddenly he did on my drawing what took on a completely different life. None of these relationships are accidental."

Gorky seldom drank, but at parties, lacking practice, he sometimes drank too much. He sang with a passionate, deep baritone and he was a good dancer who performed, at least on one occasion, an Armenian Sword Dance, pushing the kitchen table aside and picking up two carving knives. He worked himself into a frenzy, singing and leaping in the air, swirling the knives above his head and slapping the flat side against his thighs. He began nicking himself and a witness said, "Blood spurted all over the place. He was slipping and dancing in his own blood."

More than once after the last summer in Maine, Gorky slammed the door in Connecticut with a rope slung across his shoulder, announcing that he was looking for a nice tree to hang himself. Mougouch sent little Maro after her father, telling her to please ask her father to make a swing for her, so she could play.

Gorky's life closed in calamity. Two years after the studio fire and the insult of his colostomy, his neck was broken when he was a passenger in a car driven by Julien Levy. The last straw was his wife's affair with Matta Echauren. Gorky was crushed when he learned of it. Many times in the past

Gorky threatened to kill himself. This time he told a friend he was "going on a long journey." He removed the neck brace that held his broken neck in alignment, put the noose where the brace had been, and at last succeeded in hanging himself. His body hovered less than a foot off the ground.

Gorky, a few days before the end, confessed to a friend, "You know, I made a terrible mistake getting in with these Surrealist people. The husbands sleep with each other's wives. The wives sleep with each other. And the husbands sleep with each other. They're terrible people. I never should have let Mougouch get mixed up with them."

No doubt Mougouch's affair with Matta destroyed something fundamental in Gorky, but Gorky used his own suicide as a way to punish those who loved him. The only time artists are depressed is when they are not working, and Gorky was in despair over his inability to move forward in his painting. Gorky's suicide was an aggressive act that he had rehearsed all his life. He had practiced his death to perfection but he would not die until he no longer needed to paint.

HAYDEN

Hayden Herrera has evolved from being an art historian with an exceptional eye to being a writer with an ability to make the artist's biography jump to life through tellingly vivid descriptions of the paintings. We, the readers, become privy to what made the artist make her mark or his mark, her or his particular scribble, in the first place. Herrera's underlying assumption is that the art an artist produces is a distillation of the self; as time has told us, this is the part of the artist's biography that will outlive the person. Herrera makes us see that a living hand made the paintings.

Herrera's childhood is a checkerboard; she hopped back and forth between divorced parents—each parent married five times. She went to 16 schools, including Dalton in New York, Truro Public School, and three different English-language schools in Mexico. She lived with her grandmother in Cambridge for a year, attending Buckingham, Brown, and Nichols after three years of boarding school in Putney, Vermont.

She spent her senior year at the American Community School in Paris, living in an apartment in a large house owned by Pierre Colle, whose gallery had exhibited Frida Kahlo in her one show in Paris. Hayden, following Paris, attended Radcliffe for two years, married Philip Herrera, a journalist, and then finished her undergraduate studies at Barnard College in New York. Before graduating, she was the mother of two little children. After teaching kindergarten for three years, she went to Hunter College and earned a master's degree by writing a thesis on Gorky's *Garden in Sochi* series. She continued working towards a doctorate at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She had planned to write on Gorky, but this plan changed when she visited her mother in Mexico. At dinner with Joyce and Max Kozloff (Max had been her teacher and was an editor at *Artforum*), she was presented with a catalogue of work by Frida Kahlo. Max Kozloff

suggested she write about this artist for his magazine. Herrera's art history studies, decidedly "Euro-centric," as she put it, prompted her to go to the Kahlo exhibition with low expectations. She had never paid attention to Mexican art. Not knowing anything about Kahlo's life, Herrera set off to see her show. "The paintings," she remembered recently, "were so strong, so moving, I thought, what's going on here, why did Kahlo need to make them? Curiosity drove me."

In *Artforum* she published a groundbreaking feature on Frida Kahlo, based on an independent studies paper supervised by Linda Nochlin. After the article was published, Fran McCulloch, an editor at HarperCollins wrote Herrera a brief note, "Why don't you write a biography?"

A lot of material already had been published on Gorky and almost nothing on Kahlo. The excitement of original research and the idea of writing about a woman lured Herrera. Her advisor was the scholar of early 20th-century American art, Milton Brown. "I went to him and asked if it was OK to write a dissertation about Frida Kahlo, thinking he might object since she was Mexican and my field was 20th century American art. His perspective was broad enough to include Mexican-Americans, but most art history departments at that time would not have allowed it. I then said, 'Is it all right if this is a biography?' I worried he would say no, that the topic had to be more strictly abstract, more theoretical. But he said yes, and I was puzzled. I asked him why it was all right. He said the reason most people don't do biographies is that they are so much work. Of course I didn't pay any attention to that advice. Frida took five years, Gorky eight or nine."

Herrera pursued an interest in painting that grew out of her childhood experience of living with Gorky paintings. This came about when Herrera's father, John Phillips, married Mougouch, Gorky's widow.

Mougouch and John Phillips lived in a dilapidated house on Beacon Hill in Boston with Maro and Natasha Gorky, Mougouch's small children. Filling the walls were numerous paintings by Gorky. "When you are 12 years old," Herrera recalled to me, "you are trying to understand the adult world. Looking at these paintings, I was always thinking, Why did he paint them? Why did he make those shapes, so peculiar—just when they begin to look like real things, they change into something else! Maro and Natasha and I would invent things out of those paintings. One we called the 'Bugs Bunny' painting. It's in my Gorky book under the title 'To Project, To Conjure.' For us children, naturally projecting and conjuring, there was a rabbit on the right hand side of the painting."

Why did she chose to make a *life study* of these two artists, Frida and Gorky, each *tragic figures* who died with the kind of religious pain we associate with Christian *suffering*? This is the question the readers of her books will ask, and she will not tell. For all we know, she may be writing a novel.

CHRISTOPHER BUSA is editor of Provincetown Arts.



On *The Hours*

TALKING WITH MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM

BY PAUL LISICKY

W

hat happens when a literary novel is made into a Hollywood movie? More often than not, the results are dismal. (Think of the filmed adaptations of A.S. Byatt's *Possession* or of Mona Simpson's *Anywhere But Here*.) But when asked what he thought of the film based on his novel *The Hours*, Michael Cunningham offered an unexpected reply. "I may be the only living novelist who feels he's been treated well by Hollywood," he told Sue Harrison of the *Provincetown Banner*. "I'm thrilled with the movie. I feel it not only does justice to the book but, more important, does justice to itself. It resembles the book but has a life of its own—if you saw it without knowing about the book, I don't think you'd feel anything missing. It has great vitality, a look, an essence that belongs exclusively to it." In a recent article on the making of the film in the *New York Times*, he wrote: "These actors are not who I imagined when I wrote the book, but I feel as if they are reincarnations of people I've known intimately. It's as if people dear to me had died, and I find myself meeting them afterward, in other bodies, and simply knowing, from their gestures and their eyes, from some ineluctable familiarity, that these are they, returned." Since its release in late December 2002, *The Hours* has received a multitude of industry accolades, including nine Academy Award nominations, a Golden Globe for Best Drama, and 11

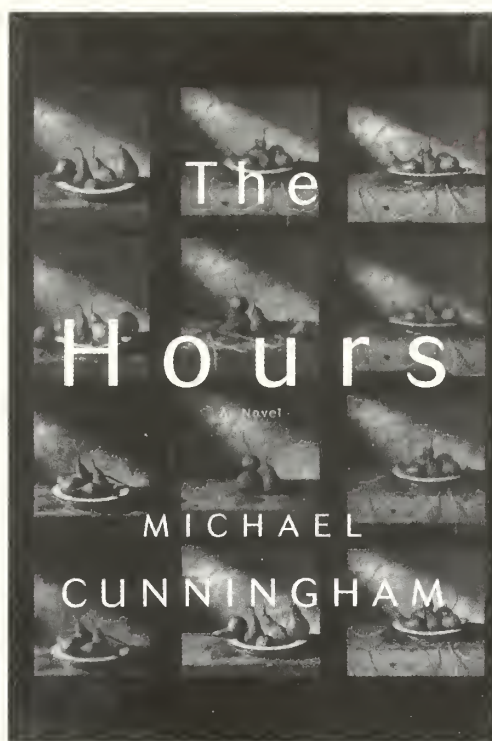
nominations from the British Academy of Film & Television Arts. Nicole Kidman took home a Best Actress Oscar for her interpretation of Virginia Woolf, whose brilliant novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Hours* refracts and pays homage to.

Last year, Michael—a summer resident of Provincetown, and someone whom many of our readers can call a friend—talked about the evolution of his Pulitzer Prize winning novel, a book which continues to attract readers a full four years after its publication. (As of March 23, 2003, it had been on the *New York Times* Paperback Bestseller List for 18 weeks. Not coincidentally, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* had been on the same list for seven weeks.) Our interview took place on a blindingly bright day with crusts of gray snow on the curb and a ringing cold in the air. It might have been the lovely, emblematic New York City morning on which Clarissa goes out to buy flowers for her party. We'd tried and tried to meet for weeks; we made appointments at the gym, or passing each other on Sixth Avenue, but our schedules never seemed to mesh. At long last, we decided to conduct our interview via e-mail, even though we live around the corner from one another in Chelsea. Ironically, e-mail seemed to be the most appropriate, intimate medium for this exchange, the way we make links across time and distance these days. "Things have just been whirly and beyond," he wrote me in another message sent from Los Angeles two nights before the Academy Awards ceremony. "Soon I get back to my life with great relief."

PAUL LISICKY: Years ago, when you'd first started working on *The Hours*, you described the project as "a queer version of *Mrs. Dalloway* with gay men." Could you talk a little about how the content of the book shifted over time?

MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM: I did, in fact, set out initially to write that book. It was going to be set in contemporary New York City, in Chelsea, and was going to involve an upper-class 52-year-old gay man (the same age as Clarissa in the Woolf novel), who was relinquishing the very last of his strenuously prolonged youth and was giving a party. It was going to echo Woolf's novel as closely as possible, though the party in my book was going to be all muscle boys, with a parallel story involving a Septimus Warren Smith-ish figure, deranged by AIDS instead of World War I, who would kill himself. I did imagine that my Mister Dalloway (though I wouldn't have called him that) would experience an epiphany upon hearing of the stranger's death, like the one Clarissa Dalloway has when the doctor tells her so off-handedly about Septimus' death, but I thought my gay male Clarissa would be more deeply rocked by it, more undone and transformed. I was going to leave him at the end of his big empty party, at the beginning of what would be enormous changes in his life.

I spent almost six months writing the opening chapters of that book, and it took me that long to realize what you've probably figured out already. It wasn't enough of an idea for a book. It wasn't a terrible idea, it just wasn't enough. It was a conceit; it was a social satire. And really,



even with the settings and the genders changed, why would anybody want another *Mrs. Dalloway* when we've already got one, a great one?

So after the shock wore off—after I recovered from the notion that I'd wasted six months and began looking at what, if anything, I might salvage from the wreckage—I started writing the far more complicated novel that became *The Hours*. I kept the gay male version of Clarissa for a while, but it began to seem superfluous, tricky. Or maybe I should say, it began to seem like one trick too many, considering the number of them I was trying to pull off. As I looked and looked at *Mrs. Dalloway*, as I worked these various improvisations on it, it seemed more and more deeply, incontrovertibly, a story about women.

PL: Were you at all surprised by the critical and popular reception of *The Hours*?

MC: It would not be an exaggeration to say that I've been surprised. I'd expected mixed reviews and no sales whatsoever. I mean, it was a complex and dark-ish book about three women, one of whom was Virginia Woolf. It had no sex or car chases. It was about writing and reading, among other subjects, and such subjects do not generally tend to gladden the hearts of agents, publishers, and booksellers.

Maybe the most unambiguously satisfying aspect of the book's success is the clear implication that there are people out there, in considerable numbers, who will in fact read a somewhat difficult, unconventional book. This runs counter to almost every accepted wisdom about who readers are and what they want, what books will and will not sell. It's enormously encouraging to think about continuing to write for these people—to feel like there's an audience willing and even eager to go places with you. I've heard similar sentiments from other writers when they talk about *The Hours*. Its reception has been good news for crackpot writers all over the place.

PL: Did you have any input on the filmed version of *The Hours*?

MC: David Hare, the playwright, wrote the screenplay, and did a remarkable job. It's faithful to the book but not too faithful, which was exactly what I'd hoped for. I wouldn't have wanted a slavish, overly reverent adaptation. I've sat through too many high-minded, deadly dull movie versions of novels. I wanted David to mess around with the story, extend it into this new medium, and take it somewhere else.

I did talk to David a few times as he worked, and again as he revised. I talked to Stephen Daldry, the director, too. Mostly about who these people are, where they come from, what they want, why they do what they do. I had a great time. I felt slightly like Alice looking through the looking glass.

PL: What's next? How is your work changing?

MC: I'm about halfway into a new novel, which is very, very different from *The Hours*. It's going to be three linked novellas, each done in a different genre. There's a Gothic horror story, a romance, and a science fiction story. I've been interested in genre fiction for a long time. Partly because some of it, not much but some, is wonderful, and gets underestimated because it's not kept on the "serious" shelves. If Ursula K. LeGuin or Samuel Delany weren't classified as science fiction writers, they'd be much more widely read than they are.

And partly, too, because I think the collective appetite for these stories can't be attributed simply and entirely to laziness and stupidity, though laziness and stupidity should never be wholly removed from any human equation. I suspect people are looking for transformation as well as escape, for exposure to a vast, magical world, and I get it. I want that too. It seems like a lot of this genre stuff is the grown-up version of the stories we loved when we were kids, full of wizards and witches and dragons guarding caves. I want to see if I can put a spin on those kinds of stories and, at the same time respect them, deliver at least some of their traditional satisfactions. Though of course, if you check with me a year from now, this book may have turned into something else entirely, as my books generally do.

As to how my work is changing, well, I don't know, really. I know that it is changing, simply because I keep coming closer to learning how to write novels. As far as I can tell, we spend our whole lives learning that, and die still trying. That's what's interesting about it.

PAUL LISICKY is the author of Lawnboy and Famous Builder. He teaches at Sarah Lawrence College and in the Summer and Fall Workshop programs of the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

FACING PAGE: (LEFT TO RIGHT) DIRECTOR STEPHEN DALDRY WITH AWARD WINNING AUTHOR OF "THE HOURS" MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM ON THE SET OF "THE HOURS."
PHOTO BY: CLIVE COOTE, COURTESY PARAMOUNT PICTURES

The Hours

BY MARK DOTY

Big blocks of ice
— clear cornerstones —
chug down a turning belt
toward the blades of a wicked,

spinning fan; scraping din
of a thousand skates and then
powder flies out in a roaring
firehose spray of diamond dust,

and the film crew obscures
the well-used Manhattan snow
with a replica of snow.

Trailers along the edge of the Square,
arc lamps, the tangled cables
of a technical art, and our park's

a version of itself. We walk here
daily, the old dogs and I glad
for the open rectangle of air

held in its frame of towers,
their heads held still and high
to catch the dog run's rich,

acidic atmosphere, whitened faces
— theirs and mine — lifted toward gray
branches veining the variable sky.

Today we're stopped at the rim:
one guy's assigned the task
of protecting the pristine field

a woman will traverse
— after countless details are worried
into place — at a careful angle,

headed toward West Fourth.
They're filming *The Hours*,
Michael's novel, a sort of refraction

of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Both books
transpire on a single April day;
that's the verb; these books do

breathe an air alive with possibility,
all attention, as if their substance
were a gaze entirely open

to experience, eager to know —
They believe the deepest pleasure
is seeing and saying how

we see, even when we're floored
by spring's sharp grief, or a steady
approaching wave of darkness.

In the movie version, it's winter;
they're aiming for a holiday release,
and so must hasten onward.

Someone calls out Background!
and hired New Yorkers begin
to pass behind the perfect field,

a little self-conscious, skaters
and shoppers too slow to convince,
so they try it again, Clarissa passing

the sandblasted arch
bound in it ring of chainlink,
monument glowing gray against the gray.

A little less now in the world to love.

Taxi on Bleecker, dim afternoon, after
a bright one's passing, after the hours
in stations and trains, blur of the meadows

through dull windows, fitful sleep,
heading home, and now the darkness inside
the cab deeper than anything a winter afternoon

could tender. Nothing stays, the self
has no power over time, we're stuck
in a clot of traffic, then this: a florist shop,

where something else stood yesterday,
what was it? Do things give way that fast?
PARADISE FLOWERS, arced in gold

on the window glass, racks and rows
of blooms, and an odd openness on the sidewalk,
and — look, the telltale script of cables

inking the street, trailers near, and Martian lamps,
and a lone figure in a khaki coat poised
with a clutch of blooms while they check her aspect

through the lens: Clarissa, of course,
buying the flowers herself.
I take it personally. As if,

no matter what, this emblem persists:
a woman went to buy flowers, years ago,
in a novel, and was entered

by the world. Then in another novel,
her double chose blooms of her own
while the blessed indifferent life

of the street pierced her, and now
here she is, blazing in a dim trench
of February, the present an image

reduced through a lens, a smaller version
of a room in which love resided.
Though they continue, shadow and replica,

copy and replay, adapted, reduced,
reframed: beautiful versions — a paper cone of asters,
golden dog nipping at a glove — fleeting,

and no more false than they are true.

MARK DOTY was the cover subject of Provincetown Arts in 1994.
This poem appeared recently in the London Review of Books.

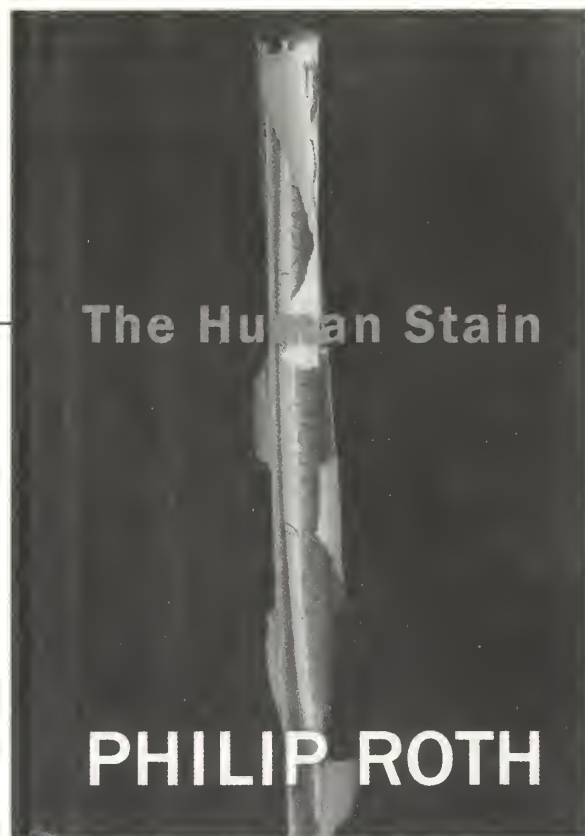
Nicholas Meyer

S C R E E N W R I T E R

BY JILL KEARNEY

"The sensory fullness, the copiousness, the abundant—superabundant—detail of life, which is the rhapsody. And Coleman and Faunia, who are now dead, deep in the flow of the unexpected, day by day, minute by minute, themselves details in that superabundance. Nothing lasts, and yet nothing passes, either. And nothing passes just because nothing lasts."

—Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*



NICHOLAS MEYER had six weeks to come up with a pitch for his screen adaptation of Philip Roth's novel, *The Human Stain*. The weeks ticked down to days, and Meyer, the author of several best-selling novels including the Sherlock Holmes-meets-Sigmund Freud chronicle, *The Seven Percent Solution*, had to face the empty page.

HOLLYWOOD NICK

Written in the wake of the Lewinsky scandal, Roth's novel is an eloquent tirade against the pettiness of American intellectual life and the story of a latter-day Hester Prynne named Coleman Silk, an eminent academic and closeted African American male who is ostracized from civil society for uttering an ambiguous noun. *The Human Stain* is not a likely candidate for a film adaptation. Not only is it a literary novel whose chief strengths lie in its linguistic virtuosity, but it is a story that subverts all the Hollywood commandments: The hero is a man in his unphotogenic 70s who embarks on a *Last Tango*-ish adventure with a woman half his age. The hero not only dies, he dies without the obligatory redemptive hoe-down in which he reconciles his disparate selves. It is a novel that champions the theory, as Roth writes, "There really is no bottom to what is not known."

How do you translate such a story into pictures without rendering it a tepid cartoon?

Two days before Meyer's scheduled meeting, he asked his wife Stephanie for advice. She said, "Tell the truth. You gave it your best shot and nothing came." Nick felt immediately that "a great burden had lifted."

Two days later he was sitting in the tub watching his toes turn into prunes when "Suddenly, Boom! Act One, Act Two, Act Three: *click click click* right in my head! I didn't dare move. I couldn't reach for anything. I didn't want to dry myself lest it would vanish." The novel had suddenly fallen into place as three acts of a play.

The elegant solution Meyer conceived is not as self-evident as it seems. In one of my past lives I worked in the movie business as a story editor and creative executive, analyzing literary material for its film potential, and I can't say I would have sent this one up the food chain, dazzling as the book is. *The best books are immune to adaptation.* That's what my log line would have read.

You may need to have lived in the movie business for a time to appreciate what a small club Nicholas Meyer inhabits; 16 produced screenplays, nine films as director, two plays, and five celebrated novels (not to mention teleplays and countless unaccredited rewrites of other screenwriter's work). In Hollywood, nobody cares much about the plays or the novels, but a guy who has produced screenplays in the double digits is as rare as endangered codfish. Even successful screenwriters in Hollywood labor in obscurity, making what by most Provincetown standards would qualify as an obscene bonanza, but nine tenths of their labors never see the light of day. Meyer hasn't broken stride in 30 years, and his name keeps showing up in the titles.

His screenplay for *The Human Stain* is arguably the best work of his career. He would seem to be a freakishly consistent demon of literary productivity, but to hear him tell it, "I am the last person to understand anything, because I evolve my thinking very slowly." Meyer spent 15 years thinking about *The Seven Percent Solution*; when he finally cracked it in his head it took a scant six months to

write. He has learned to trust this odd, staccato method, which entails a lot of aimless downtime followed by short bursts of productivity. His methodology is both the tortoise's and the hare's.

I lived and worked in Hollywood for 10 years, and I know two Nicholas Meyers: my Provincetown friend and neighbor; and Hollywood Nick, an A-list writer, admired, revered, and even feared, and one of a very few screenwriters who could write a mainstream entertainment with a literate soul. Meyer's credits belie his actual output; because of the arcane rules the Writers Guild of America uses to establish screen credit, writers who rewrite others' efforts often receive no acknowledgement for their work on screen.

Nick's subjects are diverse and difficult to pigeonhole, but what they have in common is a certain ambition, scale and theatricality which is not surprising if you grew up listening to the opera music spilling from the Meyer home. His first screen credit was for the cheerful exploitation film, *Invasion of the Bee Girls*, the story of a town besieged by sexually rapacious female scientists who transform themselves into a swarm of killer bees. He went on to write *The Seven Percent Solution*, an homage to Conan Doyle in which Meyer cast himself as the editor of an undiscovered memoir by Dr. Watson chronicling Holmes' treatment for cocaine addiction by Sigmund Freud. First time novelists rarely get the job adapting their own work, but Meyer had a bestseller and the leverage to demand the job. He also realized a childhood fantasy.

He had grown up as "a backward kid and a lonely kid," whose mother died when he was 12. He had "what in psychiatry is called a counterphobic response, where the object feared becomes the object loved. The first movie I ever saw I ran out of terrified." It was the *Beggar's*

Opera with Laurence Olivier as Captain McKearth. Nick idolized Lawrence Olivier; he says the actor "sort of saved my life on numerous occasions, though he had no knowledge of this whatsoever." Later as an adult Nick wrote Olivier an "adrenaline-drenched fan letter" while finishing *Seven Percent Solution*, thanking Olivier for his *Cherry Orchard*, which had moved him to understand Chekhov for the first time. In response he got, "A very nice little note saying *thank you very much, glad you liked the movie, and good luck with your writing*, a perfunctory letter, and neither of us speculating that the book that was going to come was going to be such a God-Almighty hit, that it would make me into a sort of playing professional person, that being a bestseller it would be bought for the movies, that I would only sell it on the stipulation that I write the screenplay, and that having written the screenplay the day would come when Herb Ross, knowing none of this history, would quite innocently turn to me and say, what do you think about Lawrence Olivier to play Professor Moriarty?"

Olivier accepted the role, and, says Nick, "There came a day at Pinewood Studios where Herb Ross introduced me to Sir Lawrence, and I found myself face to face with my personal God and hero."

More Holmes novels followed, and by this time Meyer wrote the adaptation and directed the film, *Time After Time*. Half of what he knows about screenwriting he says he learned at the Iowa Writers Workshop under Howard Stein studying Aristotle's *Poetics*: "Drama," Meyer concluded, "from a structural standpoint is asking a question, building up as much suspense as possible, you answer the question, the audience goes home." The other half he learned from watching his own screenplay twisting in the wind through the director's lens. "What really made me into a screenwriter was directing, and thinking 'Oh my God where's a chain saw!' What I realized was that 50 percent of the dialogue has to go."

Meyer wrote three *Star Trek* movies, directing two of them, and became an unwitting cult hero to a subculture of lonely yearning nerds. He has what he calls a "grudging respect" for the *Star Trek* phenomenon, which he finds "baffling and wonderful. I think I exist in relation to it the way Conan Doyle exists in relation to Sherlock Holmes, which is to say that he didn't necessarily understand it, but he could do it." When he got over his squeamishness about boarding the *Enterprise*, he realized that the *Star Trek* arena was part Homer and part C.S. Forester's Captain Horatio Hornblower in outer space. The size of the canvas gave him lots of room to move. "The thing I like about *Star Trek* is that I can say anything I want, tackle any theme, as long as it comes out of those people's mouths."

In the '70s and '80s Meyer became "The Paramount house fixer for scripts that needed to be transformed from good to great," says Ruth Pomerance, a veteran studio executive who first met him at the William Morris Liter-

ary Agency. Pomerance remembers when Paramount brought *Fatal Attraction* to Meyer for a rewrite when they couldn't get it right: "He figured out how to make it work. He was the one who said the story should be *Strangers on a Train*, a chance encounter between two people, only one is crazy and one is sane." Paramount adopted Meyer's draft, and the movie was a monstrous hit.

In 1983 Meyer directed the most watched television movie in history, *The Day After*, a chronicle of modern day nuclear Armageddon, which was seen by 100,000,000 viewers in one night, and which Ronald Reagan credits in his autobiography with changing his opinion about the idea of a winnable nuclear war. In 1987 he directed *The Deceivers* for Merchant Ivory, and in 1990 he directed *Company Business*, starring Gene Hackman and Mikhail Baryshnikov from his own screenplay. Other films he directed were not so warmly received: *Volunteers* was one of a very few Tom Hanks movies that stumbled at the box office; but Hanks' marriage to Rita Wilson, whom Meyer had cast as the love interest, ensued.

Nick has not directed a feature film since 1991. When his first wife died of breast cancer, leaving him the single father of two young girls, Nick scaled back his ambitions for a time. Directing is hard on a one-parent family, and something had to give. But his literary productivity continued. Produced screenwriting credits that followed include *Company Business*, *Voices*, *Sommersby*, *The Informant*, and *The Prince of Egypt*. In 1993 he produced a play about Leo Tolstoy entitled *Loco Motives*, and adapted Homer's *Odyssey* for NBC. Meyer has just delivered a television pilot and a screenplay adaptation of another Philip Roth novel, *The Dying Animal*, for the same company that produced *The Human Stain*.

PROVINCETOWN NICK

Then there is the Provincetown Nick Meyer. Our houses face each other across the narrow great divide of Commercial Street, separating the houses that face the bay from those that face the street. Nick is 12 years my senior, an age difference that made us strangers in my youth, but has evaporated since. I babysat his younger sisters. I biked over the dune trails with his father, Buddy, then in his 70s, the summer before he died. I loved Nick's father, and Nick is an affectionate dueling raconteur with mine. I grew up under the tutelage of Buddy's incessant, charming, pathological puns, the price of admission for crossing his bulkhead on the way to the bay. We shared a beach access, or rather, I should say, they shared theirs with us, an intimacy in Provincetown that is impossible to overstate. Most of my sense memories of adolescence tie to the Meyers and the Mozart that drifted from their screen door to the path we crossed a dozen times a day. The music was our soundtrack to the cinematic bay. When we became friends later as adults, we dispensed with the preliminaries.

During my formative years in Ptown, Nick was away in Hollywood dating Shelly Hack from *Charlie's Angels*. Buddy called her a blonde *shikse*, and I'm sure that's where I learned the word. I have surprised a few people over the years with my WASPs face and my command of Yiddish, which I acquired on Commercial Street. In some towns neighbors share good recipes, but this town relished words; a little Yiddish here, a nice nautical splicing term, a pun. (When my father built a motorized composing machine out of a dump-salvaged oil drum for our neighbor the composer Jacob Druckman, Buddy declared the resulting music "Esso-teric.")

We received updates about Hollywood Nick from Buddy and Leanne on the Meyer deck. We heard a lot about Nick's seminal foray into filmmaking: the Provincetown version of *Around the World in 80 Days*. Nick's actual first job in film was not the *Killer Bees*, but an 8-millimeter remake of the Mike Todd/Jules Verne classic. Nick was 10 and the film was shot in the "mysterious pilings of wrecked bulkheads" along the East End waterfront. Nick played the patrician Phileas Fogg to Ronnie Roose's goofball valet, Passepartout. His mother, the pianist Ellie Meyer was dying, and his father took him to see Todd's extravagant production of the novel he had read to Nick as a child. This was "the transforming event" of the future screenwriter's life, "the only time I ever saw my father come out of a movie and walk to the box office and buy more tickets. There was a souvenir program book, and the title was *You Too Can Make a Motion Picture, No Previous Experience Necessary*. A sarcastic article, it said all you need is 12,000 people in six different countries and eight million dollars, but the sarcasm was completely lost on me." The son said to the father, "I want to make this movie." I was not, you know, *full of imagination*: I wanted to make the movie I'd just seen!

They shot on the Provincetown flats and in New York and New Jersey over the course of five summers. Since the production was shot out of sequence as weather and budget allowed, the stars aged and regressed from puberty to late adolescence throughout the movie, growing, says Nick, "mysteriously larger and smaller from scene to scene."

Ron Roose, also a screenwriter, is Nick's oldest friend. They were born one hour apart on the same day in 1945. "When you consider the acting," Roose says, "the rest of us are squinching our eyes at the camera, thinking very self-consciously of what we were supposed to do, affecting very childlike performances. Nick stands in the middle of scenes as though he knows why he's there, as if he is born to the role." Roose was struck even then by Nick's tenacity. The other kids moved on to other preoccupations, but "Nick persisted, constructing train trellises in the basement, cutting in old home movies from trips to London and Paris, putting a soundtrack and music to it."

Meyer and Roose's fathers were both eminent shrinks, who co-authored psychoanalytic

papers together. Meyer had written an important psychoanalytic study of the writings of Joseph Conrad and Roosevelt specialized in treating the psychological ailments of artists. Their sons, Nick and Ron, collaborated on several screenplays; and Ron edited four of Nick's feature films.

I never saw *Around the World in 80 Days*, but the legend of the first East End production inspired my adolescent crowd to undertake *Mutiny on the Red Herring*, shot on location in my father's barely seaworthy 12-foot-long wooden demasted sailboat. That none of us drowned was a miracle. We too, made a motion picture, and many years later, I too ended up in the same exasperating, knucklehead business. If Nick grew up to be Phileas Fogg, a gentleman adventurer willing to plunge into a wide array of career threatening writing assignments, I grew up to be Passepartout, a sort of screenwriter's valet. I started working for Francis Coppola, and for the next 10 years I worked as a story editor, creative exec, and development person in L.A. and New York. I had a dozen titles but they all meant the same thing; I worked with screenwriters, helping them develop stories, writing the sort of dreaded notes that Nick rarely receives. We came to know each other as grown ups in Provincetown, the summer before his first wife Lauren died.

I've never seen Nick on a stage but he has stage presence, a large ebullient voice, a boyish glee in telling even stories at his own expense in which a beloved script went down in flames, a year's labor down the tubes. There is something about him of a grown-up Harry Potter, only darker complected, smoking cigars, with a laugh that crosses the street. That summer we dined together over pasta in the Meyer dining room, where I experienced a vague malaise, as though I'd crashed a party uninvited. Leanne Meyer hadn't changed one stick of creaky white wicker since Buddy died, and it was easy to imagine him coming out of the kitchen with a bottle of good wine, and glasses, and the cat-eating-canary smile of a man who has a joke in him that wants release. Provincetown is the only town I've stayed in long enough to know the ghosts, and I know a lot of them: Huddy and Ione, the Florsheims, old man Thomas, Mr. Hayes, who used to paint in his 90s at the foot of the Meyer steps as the tide came in, until his easel was submerged. I know the ghosts in almost every house from the Texaco station to the Mailer manse. No one has evicted them, no one has renovated anything, and in some way I can't explain, nothing has ever changed.

Lauren and I both complained of aching necks. We were both in the middle of 800-page summer novels and we laughed about our reading-related maladies, but Lauren's pain turned out to be recurrent breast cancer; mine was only a sore neck. She died the following winter, leaving behind two beautiful young children and a devastated Nick.

He didn't have much time to grieve. He hired a nanny from a service in L.A. My father insisted that he buy a sunfish, and taught him to sail as a means of airing out his grief. When he wasn't with Madeline and Rachel, Nick was circling the bay. You can learn a lot about a person in



NICK MEYER, PROVINCETOWN

Provincetown from how they cross the water, the hell-bent for leather windsurfers, or the octogenarian Yankee rowing her shell like a slow bullet to the Point. Nick didn't seem to be going anywhere in particular, but it turns out he works hardest when he's circling.

"I believe there are two creative processes," he says. "The Mozart Method and the Beethoven Method. Mozart would compose music in his head while shooting pool. For him writing music was like pissing, which is to say it was a natural phenomenon. That's why on a Mozart score there are no corrections. Beethoven simply externalized the process—if you look at his sketchbooks you can see that the whole thing is laboriously scratched in, scratched out. For a long time, since I knew I wasn't Mozart, I felt inauthentic to work in a Mozartian method, which is to say in my head, doing the laundry, lying down staring at the ceiling."

This changed when he read Winton Dean's biography of another hero, the French composer Georges Bizet. Meyer had been listening to Carmen since he was six, and he owned 12 different full-length Carmens. He listened to everything Bizet ever wrote. "Bizet had a rather erratic creative trajectory," says Meyer, "which is to say when he was 17 years old he was fucking brilliant, and when he was 30 to 35 (after which he was dead) he was pretty brilliant, but in between there is a long fallow period of mediocre and second rate romantic music." Dean, says Meyer, argued that Bizet was "a Mozartian creator, who did it in his head, but he felt this must be wrong because he was too modest to think of himself as Mozart. He wrote to his mother that he must learn to be more German, by which he meant write all day, and in doing so completely inhibited his own musical and creative productivity for

the next 10 years of a very short life."

When Meyer read this, he was "sitting in a coffee shop on Third Avenue. I got chills all over like I had suddenly come down with something, because I realized I was screwing it up by disobeying my own basic intuitive method of creating, which does not involve sitting at a desk hour after hour, as it turns out, but sort of screwing off. I would rather sit there for an hour and a half and do something good than sit there for four hours and just be kidding myself." There is one absolute about Nick's method, however, "Every day, sooner or later, I know I will be there. Writing is mostly about showing up."

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Nick is the luckiest unlucky man I know. Consider how he met his third wife, Stephanie. "The thing about going crazy is that you don't necessarily know you are going crazy," says Nick. "You are still putting on your pants one leg at a time, earning a living, getting your kids to school, etc, but something may be seriously out of whack." After Lauren's death in 1993, Nick "conceived an urgent need to do as my father had done following the death of his wife when I was 12. I set out to find and woo a mother for my two kids, but in my zeal to follow my father's example and in my general disorientation, I made a match that was ideal for neither the children, myself, nor the woman involved." The nanny quit and moved away. Nick interviewed about 30 prospective nannies, including Stephanie, who then was 22. She had applied for the job through an agency, after deciding she preferred working with children to going to law school. Nick's six-year-old daughter Rachel wandered into the interview and later declared, "I want Stephanie," and so she was hired—"Much to my fiancé's irritation! She was young, attractive, and smart." Soon after they were married, Nick's second wife insisted that Stephanie be fired. Nick resisted, and then agreed, "most unwillingly."

I spoke to Nick during this period to congratulate him on his recent marriage, and I got off the phone thinking I had never heard a glummer newlywed. His normally jovial voice sounded as though it was coming through tar.

That marriage collapsed after a few months, and Nick took the girls to the Cape while the divorce proceeded. After they had been there for a week or so, Stephanie called. "I assumed she wanted—as was her custom—to talk to the girls." She wasn't calling for the girls. "She was so much younger than I had never allowed myself to fantasize about her, though now that she broached the subject, I found my imagination galloping away."

They were married in their bathing suits on the sand below the Meyer bulkhead. No one was invited, but there were a few neighbors and even

friendly ghosts watching and smiling benevolently undetected from a discreet distance.

Despite all the qualifying hard knocks, Nick would not seem to have been an obvious choice for the adaptation of *The Human Stain*. With the exception of his nuclear Armageddon chronicle, *The Day After*, Nick's work has a characteristic buoyancy and hopefulness which is nowhere evident in Roth's novel. Coleman Silk dies in disgrace, and remains to the end estranged from his African American family of origin and a cipher to the three children who knew him as a white Jewish intellectual. There must be some shred of exploitable redemption in a novel if a mainstream company is going to gamble millions on its adaptation, and Meyer was an astute choice not only because he has adapted difficult literary novels in the past but because he is by his own admission "marginally sunnier than Roth." By removing some of the ancillary characters, Nick's adaptation highlights the forbidden love story and lets the social commentary play a less prominent role. Meyer's screenplay is at bottom *Romeo and Juliet*, a tale of two misfits who want nothing more than to be left alone. The screenplay underscores Silk's bravery in love; he is willing to make an ass of himself for the woman he loves, and unlike Bill Clinton, to "pay the freight."

The film's producer Gary Lucchesi had read Nick's unproduced adaptation of Robertson's Davies' *Fifth Business*. He thought of Meyer because he knew that Nick could capture the nuances and pretensions of academic life, and that entering the mind of a classics professor would not be a stretch for a man who had adapted the *Odyssey* for the BBC, and taught Aristotle's *Poetics* in his screenwriting class. Lucchesi had been Nick's agent before he was President of Paramount, and he'd come to the conclusion that "Nick writes best when faced with the most difficult projects. And I thought this would be about the biggest challenge one could throw at him. You could spend three or four years trying to develop the screenplay," says Lucchesi. "But Nick knocked it out of the park with his first draft, in eight weeks."

The Human Stain is among other things an object lesson in the power of the word. (While taking roll in his classroom, Silk makes a derisive comment about two students who have never bothered to attend his class, calling them "spooks," as in specters or ghosts. The two absent students happen to be black, and Silk's comment is construed as a racist slur.) This single word drives the whole narrative engine, and causes the destruction of Coleman Silk's carefully constructed persona. Meyer's task was to tell such a story in pictures, reducing 160,000 words to roughly 20,000, and paring away seven words for each one he employs.

Nick's epiphany in the bathtub had delivered the three-act structure that the book did not possess. "The novel," he says, "hop-sotch-

es all over the place. But I had it. Act one is Coleman's downfall at the campus leading up to the place where he meets Nelson Primus and tells him he never wants to see his lilly white face. And boom, Act II is everything about young Coleman and why he meant 'Lilly White,' and once we are told that story, which logically climaxes when he walks out on his mother, we are ready to finish old Coleman's story, now knowing who he really is."

I badger Nick with questions that are all variations on the theme of, "How exactly did you write this thing?" He's a good dodger, and I come to the conclusion that he isn't being coy; he doesn't really know. "For my own piece of mind as a writer it's not helpful to be standing back trying to figure out how it is working or why it's working," says Nick, a little testily. "I tried to convert the book into a drama, and I'm just laying it out, laying it out, laying it out and not asking myself what it is I'm doing or how it's supposed to work." The less direct I am in asking the question, the better Nick is at answering it.

Another of Nick's bathtub revelations was to begin the story at the end, and to compress a great deal of exposition into the script's first page. "I had a teacher once who pointed out that Macbeth starts with a clap of thunder. Since they were dead anyway by page 41 of the book, I figured why not start with the car-assassination-crash?" Nick divulges the ending in the first line of dialogue: "This is the story of the tricky life and bitter downfall of Coleman Silk." Next we see Coleman (Anthony Hopkins), driving on a dark road beside handsome young Faunia Farley (Nicole Kidman), listening to the car radio. Suddenly a pickup truck veers into view, and the vehicles collide head-on. Meyer's second line of dialogue has Silk scream, "Jesus!" as he squints into the lights of the oncoming car driven by Faunia's deranged ex-husband Lester. Two thirds of the way through the first page, Meyer has introduced the three key players and killed the protagonist and his paramour. But there is still a good two inches of white space left on the page. The next line of dialogue reads, "Hey, if Clinton had fucked her in the ass, none of this would have happened." This conversation appears on page 150 of the novel, but the sentence, culled from seven pages of witheringly funny Lewinsky commentary, establishes the political climate in which Coleman's unlikely persecution can now unfold. Meyer has asked the question: how could the uttering of one word lead to the downfall and death of a man? Now he rolls up his sleeves and answers it.

Nick describes, half grudgingly, a process that is somewhere between brick laying and stone carving; a laying in of things, and a taking away. He reduced the role of Delphine Roux, Silk's colleague and nemesis at Athena College, who pens an anonymous threatening letter to Coleman. In the novel Delphine Roux is an equal antagonist to Lester Farley. Lester is clearly a more cinematic threat, while

Delphine personifies the subtler malice of social ostracism from the academic hoard. "I thought Delphine Roux the weakest, most irrelevant part of the book, more of his misogyny creeping in," says Nick. Roux is still present in the screenplay, but now she's a day player. Coleman's wife Iris, his first love Steena Palsson, and his daughter all suffer similar demotions in Meyer's adaptation.

One word that Coleman Silk loathes in the novel is "closure," a word often employed by the students in his literature class. "My students," says Silk, "cannot stay in that place where thinking must occur. Closure! They fix on the conventionalized narrative, with its beginning, middle, and end—every experience, no matter how ambiguous, no matter how knotty or mysterious, must lend itself to this normalizing, conventionalizing anchorman cliché." Despite the glimpses of sunlight, Nick's screenplay honors this view. The script is surprisingly faithful to the book's untidy ending: the murderer goes unpunished, and the strange contradictions of Silk's life are left standing with all their mysteries intact.

The novel is also the chronicle of a man in his 70s trespassing in the young man's game of sexual abandon. It is *Romeo and Juliet*, but the enmity between parties is generational instead of tribal; age is the dividing line that love is not allowed to cross. Roth gleefully ridicules the narrow-mindedness of Silk's young colleagues and students, and in Roth's generation gap the young are the conservatives. This parallel to the screenwriting trade strikes me: it's a young man's business, and few are still at it when their hair turns gray. When I first came to Zoetrope in the early 1980s I met many of the elder statesmen of the screenplay trade. They were honored and invited to speak at black-tie dinners at the American Film Institute, but they couldn't get arrested on a studio lot. Their names were never uttered when producers bandied names about; they had moved into the realm of revered untouchables. Nick has managed to avoid this fate.

"At the moment I don't know where my next job is, or if there is a next job, and I'm going through my usual panic mode about how long before people realize I'm 100 years old and have to sell my house. What is bizarre is that I feel currently that I am at the height of my powers. I am as alert and as open as I have been in my life. There's something to be said for having done this for years and years. You learn things. I'm more open to new kinds of narrative techniques and broadening the idea of what narrative is in the first place. I think when I was younger I was more conservative."

JILL KEARNEY is a former film executive and former west coast editor of *American Film and Premiere*. She has three children and lives on a farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

Cloaked Shame

THE MASK OF TERRORISM

BY MICHAEL SPERBER, M.D.

SHAME

SHAME, the disregarded Cinderella of the emotions, is embarrassing to make public, or reveal even to one's analyst. It is camouflaged beneath a variety of ennobling guises. Nathaniel Hawthorne's minister wore a black veil. The Columbine students hid their shame behind black leather trench coats. Thoreau was sad to write, "We know but few men, a good many cloaks and breeches."

The most intense shame is a result of a failure to be oneself. Mortified, ashamed of being ashamed, one cloaks the shame. When that precarious sense of self is disrespected, terrorism appears.

The Talented Mr. Ripley, both the novel and movie, chronicle Tom Ripley's torturous journey from authenticity to pseudo-self. His cloak was a borrowed Princeton blazer. His motto: "Better to be a fake somebody than to be a real nobody." His talent to reinvent himself is rather widespread in our society.

The first scene in the movie takes place in the men's room at Carnegie Hall, where Ripley brushes dandruff off the jackets of well-to-do concertgoers. He particularly detests his identity as a toilet attendant. In the second scene Ripley is upstairs in the empty concert hall directly above the bathrooms, using the opportunity to play Bach's "Italian Concerto" quite movingly. Then the stage manager makes a few disparaging remarks, shuts out the lights, and casts Ripley into darkness.

Ripley is invited to play at a social function, but he hasn't a decent jacket to wear. He borrows by chance a Princeton blazer and slips into the social strata of those whom he serves in the men's room. A wealthy shipbuilder, Herbert Richard Greenleaf, mistakes him for a classmate of his son, Dickie, Class of '56 and now a self-exiled playboy on the Mali coast. Ripley, offered the job of returning the shipbuilder's son to America, has misgivings about taking it. He has never completed any job he has undertaken. Nonetheless, he accepts the offer and departs.

When they meet, Dickie asks Ripley what he does for a living. Ripley replies, "I can do a

number of things—valeting, babysitting, accounting . . . I can forge a signature, fly a helicopter, handle dice, impersonate practically anybody, cook—and do a one-man-show in a nightclub if the regular entertainer is sick."

Multi-talented, Ripley can do almost anything but be himself. He has buried his most important talent. His vocational identity is but a part of his confusion. Witty banter tries to mask the knowing shame, just as the borrowed Princeton blazer conceals his absent academic identity and his humiliation at serving as a toilet attendant.

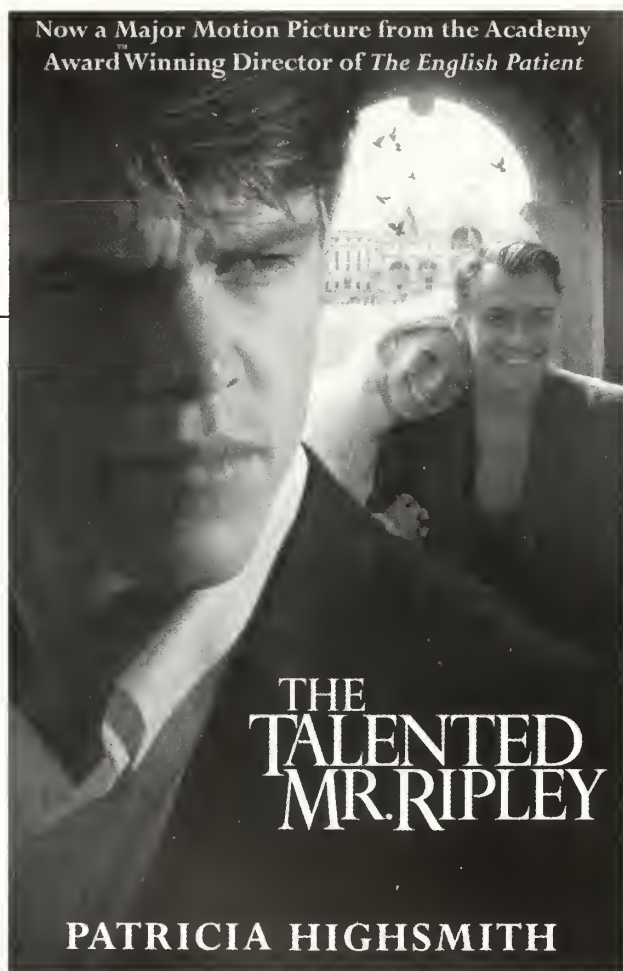
Dickie Greenleaf, bronzed, self-assured, possesses a trust fund. He has a way with women. He has a clever girlfriend who adores him. He has a home with a maid on the Mediterranean. Tom Ripley falls in love with this image of his demi-god. Greenleaf, in reality, is estranged from his parents and cannot make a commitment to his girlfriend, with whom he does not have sex. He dabbles in art. He has a streak of violence that surfaced at Princeton.

On a walk along a beach in San Remo, the two men encounter a group of acrobats making a human pyramid. A boy of 17 is boosted to the top. Ripley shouts, "Bravo!" Dickie makes a homophobic remark, and Ripley ruminates, "Maybe Cannes was full of fairies. So what?" Then a taunt of his own aunt surges forward from the past: "Sissy! He's a sissy from the ground up. Just like his father."

Ripley offered Dickie friendship, admiration, and love; but he can not convince Dickie to return to the United States. Despite his enormous efforts, once again he is a failure. A word from Latin, *mortificare*, meaning "to put to death," describes the degree of his shame. Ripley is mortified and his shame now is toxic, controlled by an idea to annihilate the disrespector: "a crazy emotion of hate, of affection, of impatience and frustration was swelling in him, hampering his breathing. He wanted to kill Dickie."

After the murder, Ripley fills his psychic vacuum by assuming Greenleaf's identity: "Wonderful to sit in a famous café and think of

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tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow being Dickie Greenleaf." When police investigations make it unsafe to be Dickie, Ripley loathes returning to his former self. "He hated becoming Tom Ripley again, hated being nobody, hated putting on his old set of habits again, and feeling people looked down on him and were bored with him unless he put on an act for them like a clown, feeling incompetent and incapable of doing anything with himself except entertaining people for minutes at a time."


THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

This parable, presented in Matthew 25:14-29, illuminates Ripley's problem. The Lord of the servants, travelling from afar, gives each servant a gift—five talents go to one, two to another, and one to the last. In time the servant with five talents gains five more, the one with two gains two more, but the servant with only one talent buries his.

When the Lord returns, he says, "You who used your talents to gain other talents—well done, true and faithful servants. Thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things." To the servant who buried his talent the Lord says wrathfully: "Take the talent from him and give it to him with 10 talents. For unto him that hath shall be given . . . but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

In the New Testament, the Lord casts that ser-

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vant into darkness. In the movie, Tom Ripley sits in the darkness of the empty concert hall, after the stage manager has turned out the lights.

Ripley had many talents, but he buried his most important to be himself, for that was like putting on "a grease-spotted, unpressed suit of clothes." In his estimation, a fraudulent identity suited him better.

A BURIED TALENT UNEARTHED

Frank W. Abignale's autobiography, *Catch Me If You Can*, also made into a movie, describes his five years living as an impostor—first in a physician's white jacket, then in an airline pilot's uniform, next in academic garb as a sociology professor, and finally in a lawyer's conservative attire. In these guises he cashed over \$2,500,000 in forged checks.

Impersonating another brought respect. He disclosed, "There is enchantment in a uniform, especially one that marks the wearer as a person of some skills, courage, or achievement." In the airline pilot outfit he felt that "men looked at me admiringly, or enviously. Pretty women and girls smiled at me. Airport police smiled courteously. Pilots and stewardesses smiled, spoke to me, or lifted a hand in greeting as they passed. Every man, woman, and child who noticed me seemed warm and friendly." Like Ripley, Abignale found it "better to be a fake somebody than a real nobody." Cloaking the shame and assuming an esteemed identity worked better than Prozac or marijuana as an anti-depressant. "Whenever I felt lonely, depressed, rejected, doubtful of my own worth," Abignale said, "the uniform brought me dignity and respect. Without it, I felt useless."

In an unlikely site, working in a movie-projection room, Abignale got a glimpse of what he had buried: "I was making good money, but I was there five nights a week, caged in a small room with nothing to do but watch the same movie over again. That's when I thought I was wasting my talent."

He unearthed it; for the next 25 years Abignale worked for the FBI Financial Crimes Unit, taught at the FBI National Academy and now is sleuthing identity theft. He keeps track of his own sense of self: "The Frank Abignale I was wasn't an egotistical, unethical, unscrupulous criminal. The Frank Abignale I am today is a good father and a good husband."

Contact with a benevolent, admiring FBI pursuer and sexual encounters with enthralled, hoodwinked bank clerks saved Abignale from being mortified like Ripley, and so he does not kill. But is as if, when he abandons the woman who loves him, he murders her soul.

PERPETUAL TITULAR COUNSELOR

The anti-hero of Gogol's story, "The Overcoat," is Akaky Akakyevich, a 30-year-old

pockmarked, hemorrhoidal, balding clerk with poor eyesight, sallow complexion and wrinkled skin. He has no family or friends.

He is a copyist with an impressive title, "Perpetual Titular Counselor" which helps cloak his shame. He takes his work home with him at night, tracing ordinary letters with devotion and tracing his favorites with delight. At work, his colleagues ridicule him mercilessly. They throw shredded paper above his head, exclaiming, "It's snowing!"

Akaky badly needs an overcoat. His old one is threadbare and the tailor insists it cannot be mended again. So Akaky forgoes his nightly tea and crackers to scrape money together for a replacement.

Like Ripley's blazer, the new coat (from afar, the cat fur looks like Marten) elevates his status among the office workers. They throw a party to celebrate Akaky's fine coat. On the way home from the festivities, two thugs steal it off his back.

Akaky consults with a person of many connections and the VIP, enraged that a lowly clerk (which he had been recently) is taking his time and he has him removed. Coatless, in the cold night, Akaky develops a fever and gives up the ghost.

Soon after a ghost is seen in the neighborhood, seeking a stolen overcoat, which puts the fear of death in the VIP. Although the clerk dies defeated, the ghost gets even.

TRENCH COAT KILLERS

The Columbine killers, disrespected like Ripley and Akaky, found garments to cloak their shame—black leather trench coats. In videotapes made before the carnage, they reveal the motive—"retaliation for years of taunting by friends and relations for their unwillingness to dress as others."

One classmate, Evan Todd, a 225-pound defense back on the football team, gives an idea of what they were up against: "Columbine is a clean, good place except for those rejects. Sure we teased them. What do you expect when you wear weird hair-dos and horns on your hats? It's not just the jocks. The whole school was disgusted. They were a bunch of homos, grabbing each other's private parts. If you want to get rid of someone, usually you tease them. So the whole school called them homos."

THE AS IF PERSONALITY

Most human interaction involves a give and take that moves in the direction of increased intimacy. The psychoanalyst, Helene Deutsch, described persons with an "as if personality" as those who form pseudo-mutual relationships based on an identification with, and imitation of, another's behavior. They maintain emotional distance, preoccupied with signals from the other that helps them with their mimicry.

Ripley gradually adopts Greenleaf's posture, style of talking, manner of walking, and

fashion of dressing. At least he usurps his ego ideal's identity. Abignale persistently digs up any detail that will make his impersonation of an airline pilot, doctor, and lawyer more convincing. The Columbine killers, having chosen black leather trench coats, identified with the aggressor. These are facets of the "as if" personality.

Abignale shifts rapidly from one vastly different professional identity to another. Deutsh comments about such individuals, who "attaching themselves with great ease to social, ethical, and religious groups . . . seek, by adherence to a group, to give content and reality to their inner emptiness and establish the validity of their existence by identification. Over-adherence to one philosophy [or field of endeavor] can be quickly and completely replaced by another contradictory one without the slightest sense of inward transformation—simply as a result of some accidental re-grouping or a circle of acquaintances."

Tom Ripley's behavior is clarified by James Gilligan in his book, *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic*: "The purpose of violence is to diminish the intensity of shame and replace it, as far as possible, with its opposite, pride, thus preventing the individual from being overwhelmed by shame." A sequence of escalating steps leads from a feeling of powerlessness and disrespect to a shame that curdles into murderous toxicity.

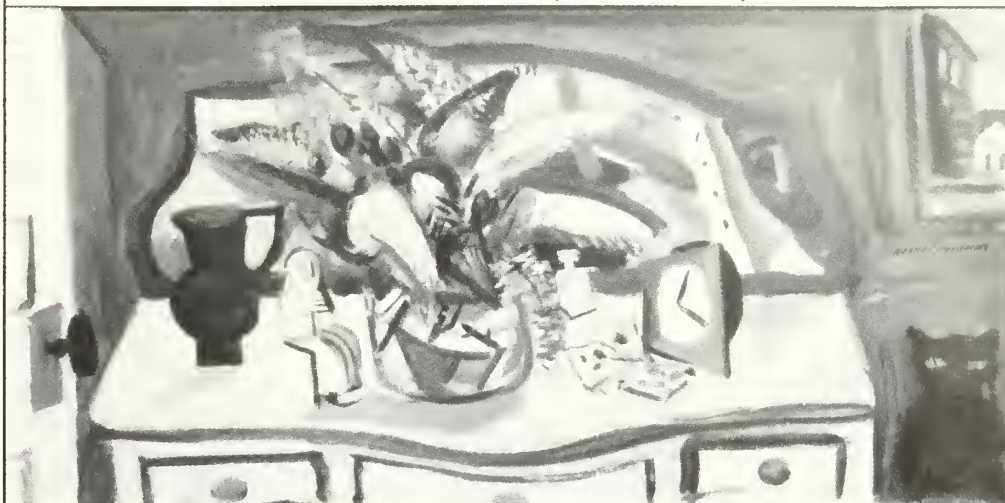
America's symbols of money and power were attacked by our own planes on 9/11 and the nation felt profoundly disrespected, powerless, and mortified. Terrorism and pride cannot co-exist. As Thoreau counseled, "If I am not I, who will I be?"

MICHAEL SPERBER, M.D., is a psychiatrist who works with the mentally ill who are in prison. His essay, "Thoreau's Cycles and Psyche," appeared in Provincetown Arts 2001.

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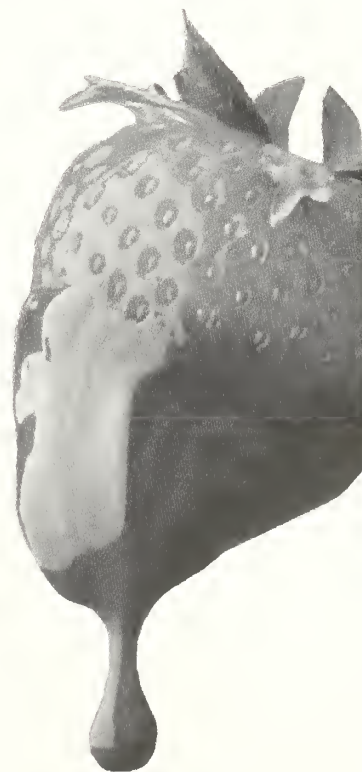
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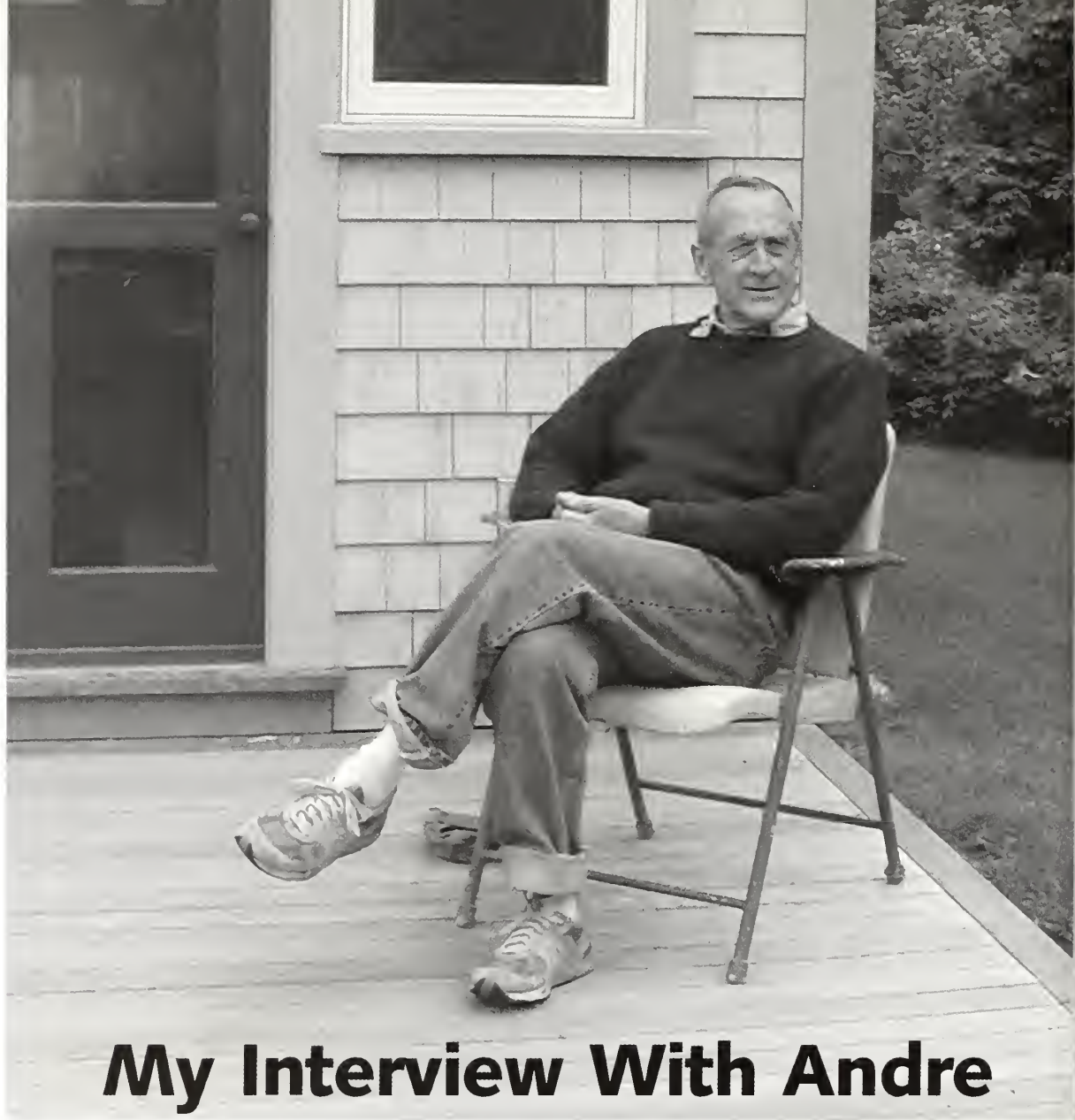
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My Interview With Andre

ANDRE GREGORY
TALKS WITH
WILLIAM J. MANN
ABOUT MOVIES,
THE OUTER CAPE,
AND THE
CONNECTIONS
BETWEEN ART
AND POLITICS

In *MY DINNER WITH ANDRE*, the quirky, odd, impossible-to-nail-down 1981 film by Louis Malle, Andre Gregory observes that the 1960s were "the last burst of the human being before he was extinguished." (Of course, he also recounts a tale of a huge creature "with violets growing out of its eyelids and poppies growing out of its toenails." It's that kind of movie.) But his point about the '60s is perhaps even more intriguing. Here was a time, Gregory was saying, when people—artists—dared to dispute the status quo and thrilled to take on The Establishment. It was a time of challenge—not only to the unsatisfactory answers they'd been given all their lives, but to the very questions being asked themselves.

So when I caught up with him last winter, fresh off his Provincetown workshop, "Acting for Film," under the auspices of the Provincetown Film Institute, I expected him to be a bit downhearted. After all, the U.S. and Britain had just invaded Iraq, and polls were showing a large majority of Americans were not questioning the Administration's motives. Nor were they troubled by the media's spin.

Yet Andre Gregory, intense, angular, smiling, was defiantly upbeat. Maybe it has something to

do with the fact that for the past year he's been spending more time at his house in Truro, which he shares with his wife, documentary filmmaker Cindy Kleine. And the Outer Cape, he explained, is the only place in the world that he truly loves. For someone who's traveled as much as Andre Gregory, that's saying something.

"What's positive about the war," he told me, exuding far more optimism than I was feeling at the time, "is that no one could have predicted that the blossoming of the peace movement would occur on such a global scale."

"But didn't it simply flare up only to go away?" I challenged him. "Hasn't it been squashed by an American media that seems vested in keeping the Bush administration in power?"

He clucked a little, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, but instead segueing into a wonderful story about a peace rally in New York with Pete Seeger. Before long I was ensnared by tales of how, as a young man, he would watch Greta Garbo and Cary Grant playing tennis. He regaled me with his thoughts on the nature of filmmaking and Ibsen's take on the cruelties of capitalism. It struck me that our conversation, meandering yet always somehow on the point, was not so unlike the one in the movie that bears his name.

"I remember seeing *My Dinner with Andre* for the first time," I told him, "and saying, 'What the hell was that?'"

He laughed. It's not an uncommon first response to the film. *Dinner* was a critic's delight; Roger Ebert says it's still the only movie he knows of that contains absolutely no clichés. Set in real time, the film documents a conversation between Gregory and Wallace Shawn, playing themselves, eating dinner in a New York restaurant. They talk on and on, served by a silent, peculiar waiter who slips in and out of the frame like a twitchy Banquo's ghost. The stories Gregory tells in the film are all real: one of my favorites is about sitting down with insects to ask them nicely to stay off the plants rather than resort to using insecticides. But the movie itself was heavily scripted and rehearsed by Malle and the two leads—who helped write the script—over a period of nine months.

Born in Paris to a Jewish family, Gregory came to the U.S. with his family before the outbreak of World War II. He made his theatrical mark in 1968 with the founding of The Manhattan Project, the legendary experimental trope. *My Dinner with Andre* led to acting roles in films as diverse as *The Mosquito Coast*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. But lately his focus has been on the politics of war and peace, and the intersection of that struggle with his art. That's where he was at when I had my own conversation with Andre.

WILLIAM J. MANN: So you're now an Outer Caper.

ANDRE GREGORY: Well, we only moved in last fall. We bought it a couple of years ago and have done a lot of renovation on it. I've been

redesigning a barn so that it can be a small rehearsal studio.

WJM: That was the dream my partner and I had, too, before we moved here. To actually live and do our work here year-round.

AG: That's exactly what we want. We're coming for six months in May and we might extend it. We've actually disliked New York for 20 years now. I just couldn't find anywhere that I'd consider moving to. Now I'd say [the Outer Cape] is the only place I've been in my life that I've really loved. There are places I've liked but this is really love.

WJM: What is it for you?

AG: Well, it's difficult [to find a place where you] can be truly in the country and at the same time have an extraordinary community around you. I mean, there are extraordinary people in New York, but I never see them.

WJM: Mary Heaton Vorse 80 years ago was writing exactly the same thing. She said she would come here to meet the people that she wanted to meet in New York.

AG: Is that so? Well, it's exactly that way. I've been in cities all my life. But in New York now, there's no nature and it's physically rather drab. There is no more culture in New York now. It's a very provincial city now. It has been for quite a while. When I got out of college I remember all the new plays on Broadway. There would be Ibsen and Tennessee Williams. Now it's all corporate. And not just theater. Art, dance. Twyla [Tharp] is still around but there's not much vital dance going on and painting is rather drab. Now there's nothing to go see except the movies, which are everywhere.

WJM: And even the movies, at least the Hollywood ones, which are the ones that are all over the place, are themselves mostly cookie-cuttered.

AG: Oh, yes, it's the same thing. Hollywood is corporate. Broadway is corporate. I find I can't create in New York anymore. Here [on the Cape] I just find the nature so inspiring. You know, at first, I didn't get it. At first it just seemed like a lot of scrubby trees. You can't just come to the Cape for four or five days and get [the nature]. You have to live into it. It's so exquisitely beautiful.

WJM: It's really like nowhere else. You suddenly cross that line in, I guess, South Wellfleet, and suddenly the Cape becomes this alien terrain of gnarly trees and everything is sand.

AG: That's really the reason [for the move]. I'm doing it for my work. I find that every 10 or 15 years I need to pull the carpet out from under me. It's [similar] to when I gave up directing for 12 years, right before *My Dinner with Andre*. I was going all over the world, which is where those stories came from. I had to find something new,

take a look at the world.

WJM: One of the things that I love about being on the Cape is there's a spirit here that allows me to feel connected to the world, even though we're cut off from so much of it. With the war and all that's going on right now, and the public support for Bush, I sometimes feel so beaten down when I'm on what my partner calls "the other side"—meaning the world off-Cape. When I'm here, however, I see there are other people who think the way that I do, who haven't become completely sucked into this madness.

AG: Yeah, because in New York, even though it's a rather liberal city, people are frightened. It's true.

WJM: I imagine it must be hard living in New York after September 11 with that sense of the city being a target. But how do you as an artist try to keep that fear from getting in the way of understanding the bigger picture? Every day we hear about all of these horrible things Saddam is doing and how the terrorists want to get us and if you question any of it, you are labeled unpatriotic.

AG: I saw a very interesting thing on TV—it was by accident because I hardly watch TV at all—a program on Blair and his relationship to Bush. And I was extremely struck by Chirac, who was saying that he had been dealing with the Arab world almost since before Bush was born. He knows the Arab world very well and [he knew] that Iraq was a weak, defeated country and that not only did it not have weapons of mass destruction but that it couldn't threaten us. It just didn't have the capability, not after the first war and the sanctions.

WJM: But the war, as terrible as it is, isn't really what troubles me the most. I admit to being glad seeing those statues of Saddam torn down. It's the bigger question of what's really happening in America.

AG: It's a terrible time, even above and beyond the war. Bush's assumption of the presidency was an illegal coup that I think was planned for a very long time. My fear is that if they win the election again, we might see the end of democracy in this country.

WJM: People might say that you're being extreme in your rhetoric but I think that is the fear that's behind a lot of this. That's what's motivating the people who are out there protesting.

AG: Absolutely. It's not just an anti-war movement. Knowing that the Democrats are as wishy-washy as they are, I think many people don't hope for too much there. But this is a third movement that's hoping to break this Administration.

WJM: Do really think there is a viable third movement? I remember before the war I was getting all sorts of emails from moveon.org and things like this and there was tremendous momentum out there. But then the war started

and it seems I don't get those emails anymore from the politicians who were blasting Bush are all quiet, playing their cards close to their vest, because they're afraid of being named as rebels.

AG: I was just at a large rally and Pete Seeger said something extraordinary: these were the most dangerous times he can ever remember this country facing, but also the most hopeful. I asked him in what way hopeful, and he said, "The veils of illusion are dropping for many Americans and they are being forced to finally look at the truth."

WJM: I don't know about that. I don't think most Americans see beyond the illusion. I think the illusion is becoming so engraved in stone that the truth is nearly impossible to make out.

AG: But now we see so many people saying this. In the past, only radicals were saying this is a cruel country, it's a terrorist country. Now that's not an easy point to come to. It's a very painful point, it's like when you fall madly in love and then learn the truth about the person. I think these times are forcing Americans to ask horribly difficult questions that none of us want to deal with. It's a natural thing not to want to deal with it.

WJM: As an artist, this conviction must come through in your art.

AG: Of course. If you look at *My Dinner with Andre*, one of the main themes is [the threat of totalitarian governments] and we did it in kind of an insidious way because neither one of us are soapbox people. It just came through us. These weren't conclusions we reached with our minds. We reached them with our guts. I think the artist is an antenna in times like these when it's very hard to know what's real. Everyone is being told what to think. Ambiguity is not particularly popular.

WJM: Is that why so many artists are not speaking out, dealing with these questions? You mention someone like Pete Seeger but he's to be expected, an old lefty from the '60s. Sure we've had the occasional Dixie Chick and a few singers and actors, but it seems there are so many that remain silent, people of extraordinary influence, filmmakers in Hollywood. I think about the media, decision-makers at CNN, political commentators—people who probably would agree with what we're talking about here but remain very careful and cautious.

AG: People in Hollywood are always afraid. You speak out and there's the potential for McCarthyism. Hollywood always needs a lot of money to function, so they're always afraid.

WJM: But isn't it an artist's obligation to speak out? I used to think it was the journalist's obligation, too, but after watching how the media

folded up their tents after the 2000 election, I wasn't so sure. People are so afraid of upsetting the apple cart. "Can't have a constitutional crisis." "Can't let the rhetoric get too extreme when there's a war on." "Can't seem to be inciting revolution."

AG: Absolutely. Some of my liberal friends were critical of Michael Moore [who lambasted the war and called Bush a "fictional president" on the Academy Awards], saying that he was rude. Can you imagine?

WJM: Yeah. Rude. So were the American patriots who fought King George's armies.

People in Hollywood are always afraid. You speak out and there's the potential for McCarthyism. Hollywood always needs a lot of money to function, so they're always afraid.

AG: Well, you know the right is so extreme. I'm completely into non-violence but I believe we on the left have to be more outspoken about what we think we see because that's part of being in a democracy and part of being a patriot.

WJM: It's interesting that Seeger would call this a hopeful time. I look at the films from the 1960s and '70s and they were asking difficult questions, not always providing the answers, and didn't always have happy endings. Now it seems that everything that comes out of Hollywood fits a particular formula and nothing subverts anything, nothing challenges the way things are. I hope Seeger's right but you said it earlier, that our art has become too corporate. How can we break through that?

AG: That's the big question and only history is going to answer that one. I remember when the Soviet Union fell, my first thought was that America's next. I thought that after September 11 [the whole system] might self-destruct, that we would be able to change things.

WJM: But it didn't happen.

AG: No and I feel that a huge opportunity was lost. I think that was an opportunity, where something shocked the world, and we all could've sat down and said, 'This is going too

far.' There are too many poor people, there are too many people with AIDS not being helped, there's too much hatred of the West. Terrorism's not going to end. What can we all do together?

WJM: You're right. There was that moment. Even as much as I distrust George Bush I thought maybe he might do it. He was visiting mosques and talking about peaceful coexistence, but it shifted right back into this.

AG: It was the oil people. They had to go after the oil.

WJM: You're working on Ibsen now. How do your politics come through in that?

AG: I've been rehearsing *The Master Builder*, a version that Wally [Wallace Shawn, his collaborator on *My Dinner with Andre*] translated. I've been rehearsing it on and off for six years. And although I don't think it's generally done this way, the way we're doing it is as a roomful of indictments on the cruelties of capitalism and the male power psyche. We're hoping to make a film on it.

WJM: So you haven't finished with film?

AG: I'll do projects that interest me.

WJM: Would you take a part in a movie that had no connection to your work for social justice or peace?

AG: Probably not. I did that. I enjoyed acting in films. It was the first time in my life I made any money because I don't seem to make any money with my directing.

WJM: Today, great directors like the ones you worked with—Weir, Scorsese—have such a hard time getting films made, because Hollywood isn't interested in films that break formula.

AG: I don't know how different it is, because I only started making films in the '80s, but I do think that up until maybe the early '90s there were roles being written for actors like myself, quirky idiosyncratic types. But now movies have become star vehicles. I suppose they've always been star vehicles but they used to be surrounded by some interesting characters. That's disappeared.

WJM: Like so much. Still share Seeger's vision? You still have hope?

AG: I do. What else is there?

WILLIAM J. MANN, the author of several novels and books on film, is currently working on a biography of film director John Schlesinger.

Lucy Grealy

GOODBYE, DEAR FRIEND

BY MICHAEL KLEIN

I first set eyes on Lucy Grealy in Provincetown. Ann Patchett and I were living in the same little blue house that the Fine Arts Work Center gave us to live in during the winter of 1990, and Lucy, Ann's dear friend, came to visit often. I didn't spend a lot of time with her then, but I knew immediately that we would eventually be friends. I don't know how I knew that more than that it was just feeling that I had. I thought she was kind of brilliant in a way I had never encountered—articulate, certainly, but also imbued with—and I don't know how to put this another way—an intimate understanding of beauty and ruin. Her knowledge, as I understood it, reminded me of something Scott Peck, the pop psychologist, once said at a talk. That at the heart of every addict's plight is the desire for nirvana. So, maybe I was just recognizing a fellow addict in Lucy, though I couldn't have told you that at the time and neither could she.

I went to live in Cambridge for a year or so after the Work Center, to work on editing a book of essays about AIDS. Lucy had a Bunting Fellowship at Radcliffe at the time, and I used to see her more—whizzing through Harvard Square on her bike. But, still we hadn't really sat down and had a conversation. Until horses came up. Lucy had a great love for horses and I had worked on the racetrack for a bunch of years during the active alcoholic section of my life, so at last we had a common subject. In Cambridge and later in New York, we'd meet for dinner twice a month or so and talk about horses and writing and men. I loved Lucy's incredible humor and her willingness to fail and start again. She was, like every artist, never satisfied and yet ecstatic about her life and her work. She was also ecstatic about writers she loved—as if she had some secret knowledge of why something was really good, she offered her praise with an amazing sense of understanding and compassion. I remember her talking about J.M. Coetzee's "Disgrace" during dinner, coffee afterwards and for the entire time it took to get from Aggie's Restaurant to her apartment on Gramercy Park—a jewelbox of an apartment that looked straight out of a John Cheever or William Maxwell short story.

As long as I knew her, Lucy was adamant about her loneliness and furious at it. Because she had learned from an early age how to perfect an inner beauty to offset a physical deficit—a disfigured face after years of treatments for jaw can-

cer—she couldn't comprehend anyone not being able to see her for who she was—beyond the scar. I remember she once had a date with George Stephanopolis (she'd taken out a personal ad in the New York Review of Books and he answered it) and called me the night before and asked me, with complete seriousness, *should I tell him about my face?* She wanted to be in love deeply and meaningfully. And she was, for awhile anyway, in at least one relationship with a painter named Andy that meant quite a bit to her. Andy had also met Lucy in a way that made Lucy feel special—he'd fallen in love with the memoir she wrote, which made her somewhat famous.

I don't know how Lucy felt about fame really or if she ever calculated it as a blessing or a cost. What I do know is that her life became very different after she fell in love with heroin and her writing life and personal life were in a controlled shambles. I never knew how she actually survived those last two years, losing teaching gigs, not being able to finish a book. At her wake at an East Side apartment in New York—filled mostly with colleagues of Lucy's from Bennington College—I remember Susan Cheever talking about how surprised she was that there were people who purported to know Lucy and didn't know about her heroin addiction. We couldn't understand how people couldn't see Lucy slowly but surely going out of the world. But we knew that she was and because she was going out with a drug habit, nothing could stop her until heroin's influence, itself, stopped.

It saddens me a great deal that nobody could finally help (read: *save*) Lucy, when everybody I knew close to her had tried in one way or another. But I think that Lucy had finally been defeated and heroin came to her at a time where the defeat loomed larger than the way out. She was a wonderful writer and a wonderful friend and called me when my twin brother died last year to say she understood how it was "different"—being a twin herself—just one of so many ways of being different that ennobled Lucy's spirit and so authentically contacted mine.

MICHAEL KLEIN is author of a forthcoming memoir, *The End of Being Known*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.



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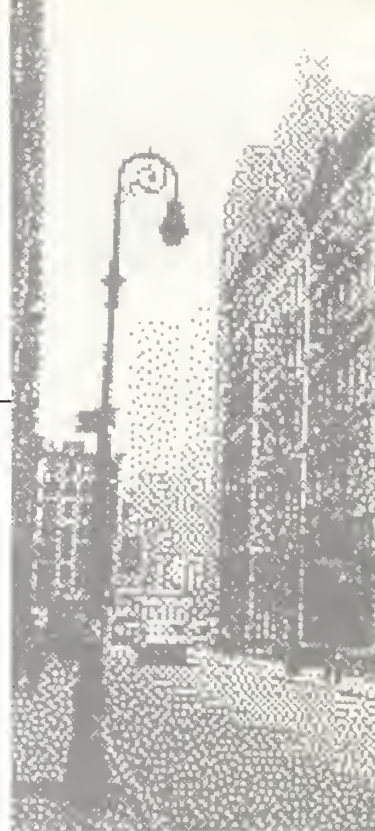
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THE RISE OF **Artists' Soho**

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ

"Choosing a place to live has been for the American artist a problem of the first order."

—Harold Rosenberg,
"Tenth Street" (1954)



housing moved into the large empty interior spaces that could be rented for as little as \$100 per month through the 1940s into the 1960s.

I first became aware of someone actually residing in the area when I was introduced on Canal Street to a Korean artist, Nam June Paik, who had just arrived in America. He rented a nearby "loft," a word new to me at the time, referring to the upper floors, customarily open spaces, of a factory or warehouse. Already prominent in European avant-garde circles, Paik had come to New York to further his career. I later learned about such urban pioneers as Alison Knowles, who, in the late

WHEN I CAME BACK to New York City from college in 1962, the area below Houston Street was an industrial slum that I might have walked through reluctantly on the way from Greenwich Village to its north or Chinatown to its east. Industrial debris littered streets that were clogged with trucks during the working day but deserted at night. Streets were not numbered, typical of most of Manhattan, but named: Mercer, Greene, Wooster, Crosby running from north/south; Prince, Spring, Broome, and Grand running from east/west. The rectangular blocks, roughly observing a perpendicular grid, were far longer from north to south than from east to west. During the 1960s, city planners repeatedly proposed a ten-lane Lower Manhattan (a.k.a. Broome Street) Expressway that would link the East River bridges on the east with the Holland Tunnel on the west.

In his book *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (1981) Charles R. Simpson writes, "In the 1700s, the land that is now the SoHo district was largely a portion of the Bayard family farm, which stretched over hills and meadows from Canal Street up to Bleeker Street. During the Revolutionary War period, wooden palisades were built across the Bayard farm, and two forts were erected in 1776 on hills situated at the present site of Grand Street, marking the northern defensible limits of the city. The war left Nicholas Bayard, the farm's owner, financially devastated and he soon after was forced to mortgage 100 acres west of the unimproved wagon road that was to become Broadway. This tract of farm land, comprising most of what became the SoHo district, was subsequently laid out in streets and sold in lots."

A century and one-half ago, this area below Houston Street attracted wealthy New Yorkers, who patronized elegant stores and theaters on Broadway. "This was the Fifth Avenue of its day," according to one guidebook. In the wake of minstrel halls came gambling casinos and eventually brothels, especially on the side streets. Walt Whitman wrote in 1857: "After dark any man passing along Broadway, between Houston and Fulton streets, finds the western sidewalks full of prostitutes, jaunting up and down here, by ones, twos, or three—on the look-out for customers." From the Directory of the Seraglios in New York comes this entry for Miss Clara Gordon at 119 Mercer Street: "We cannot too highly recommend this house, the lady herself is a perfect Venus: beautiful, entertaining, and supremely seductive. Her aides-de-camp are really charming and irresistible, and altogether honest and honorable. Miss G. is a great belle, and Southern merchants and planters patronize her mansion principally. She is highly accomplished, skillful, and prudent, and sees [that] her visitors are well entertained." The historian Timothy J. Gilfoyle in his classic about New York City prostitution, *City of Eros* (1991), writes, "Directly behind the hotels and theaters on both sides of Broadway, Mercer, Greene, Wooster, and Crosby streets were known for their rich collection of brothels." In the 1870s, according to Gilfoyle, Wooster Street had 27 warehouses while 52 were on Greene (not even art galleries were as numerous a century later.) Before long, these brothels moved further uptown.

Most of the cast-iron buildings that came to mark the neighborhood for architectural historians were constructed between 1840 and 1880, generally for use by the textile industry. Once much of this textile industry succumbed to Southern and foreign competition after World War II, printers and ware-

houses, had rented space in an industrial building on Broadway just north of Canal Street, where she lived with her husband-to-be, Dick Higgins, who decades later became my closest professional colleague. The industrial supply stores then on Canal Street seemed a long way, culturally, from my apartment on the edge of Harlem, down the hill from Columbia University, where I was a graduate student. So did the cast-iron palaces that stood out from the smaller, shabbier, mostly older buildings that were never more than a few stories high.

By the time I relocated downtown, first to the East Village in 1966 (and incidentally changed my cultural outlook from academic to bohemian—from "uptown" to "downtown"), I became aware of artists who had rented large open spaces in which they worked and incidentally lived. Around the corner from me on Second Avenue at that time, Yoko Ono, later famous, had a loft briefly above a store. A young California woman I knew that year, the daughter of a poet, had rented on Warren Street, yet further downtown, just west of City Hall, part of a loft sloppily divided, as I recall, from another woman who had already lived there for several years. I wish I could find my friend now, because I'd like to know how someone new to New York at that time had made such an unusual move. I visited Robert Rauschenberg's on Broadway around 12th Street, which was the loft center for a previous generation of artists. In Calvin Tomkins's classic description, written in 1964: "The loft was about a 100 feet long by 30 wide [or 3,000 square feet—a measure to keep in mind]. A row of supporting columns ran down the middle, but otherwise it was clear, unobstructed space. Tall, grimy windows let in the distinctively white light of downtown New York—also the roar of trucks on Broadway. [Within the space] stood a group of large

objects—a car door, a window frame, a roof ventilator mounted on sheets—components of an unfinished five-part sculpture.

"Paintings, combines, and sculptures from the recently concluded Jewish Museum retrospective were stacked against the wall farther along. There was a big table in the middle of the room, its surface cluttered with magazines, pictures clipped from magazines, felt pens and pencils, and tubes of paint and other materials. Toward the back of the room, a counter projected from the end wall formed an alcove for the refrigerator, the electric stove, and the bed—a mattress lay on the floor. All the rest of the loft was workspace."

Walking south of Houston Street at the time I noticed in certain upper-story windows houseplants or interior lights shining into the night, both signifying that someone might be residing there. However, the area between Houston and Canal Streets was still largely *terra incognita*. Taxi drivers at the time customarily didn't know the names Wooster Street, Greene Street, or Mercer Street and had to be guided block by block. Sometime around 1969 I first heard the epithet SoHo to define an area South of Houston St., the capital H meant crucially to distinguish this Manhattan neighborhood from London's Soho, which was (and is) a neighborhood of social venues and small apartments resembling New York's Greenwich Village.

II

"SoHo barely existed when I moved there in '67. There were maybe 10 people living between Canal and Houston Streets. I first lived down on Greene between Canal and Grand. Then, around '69, I moved to a building where the restaurant Jerry's is now. During the week there were trucks, rats, and rags, garbage trucks, because it was part of the carting area, so rats were just running everywhere. And the streets were filled with bales of rags and stuff like that."

—Chuck Close, "5000 Artists Return to Artists Space: 25 Years" (1998)

Prior to SoHo, many ambitious artists preferred to live in "artist colonies," as they were called, where a dozen or more artists, customarily colleagues already, purchased empty land and constructed studios. Other purposeful artists settled in sparsely populated retreats, such as Fire Island, Provincetown, or Woodstock, establishing in those communities a culture more sympathetic to art and artists than could be found elsewhere in America. These colonies differ crucially from bohemia, which are usually within an urban setting, hospitable to counterbourgeois living. Political radicals, often prominent in bohemia, are scarce in artists' colonies.

Within New York City, artists tended to create sympathetic pockets mostly in lower Manhattan. For nearly a century beginning in 1858, a building at 51 West 10th Street offered 25 studios, ranging in size from 300 to 600 square feet each, and a communal gallery that was very useful not only for displaying but selling. Among

the more prominent working and sometimes living at this address were William Merritt Chase, Frederic Church, and Winslow Homer. Nearby on Washington Square North, Edward Hopper long had a studio. The writer Thomas Wolfe briefly shared a loft with his paramour, the theater designer Aline Bernstein, at 13 East Eighth Street. "The fourth floor had recently served as a sweatshop, but it could easily be cleaned up, and those skylights, they were ideal!" writes Ross Wetzsteon. "So in January 1926 they moved in, Tom insisting on sharing the \$35-a-month rent." Artists in 20th-century Paris, by contrast, tended to work in small but well-lit ateliers on the top floors of residential buildings—penthouses to some; attics to others—often residing in an apartment immediately below. These Parisian ateliers were perceived to be so attractive that non-artists eventually wanted them as well, sometimes opening up the floor to create a living room twice the height of their bedrooms.

When The New York-born writer Henry Miller visited the painter Beauford Delaney one evening in the early 1940s at 181 Greene Street, he found "streets which seem commemorated to the pangs and frustrations of the artist; having nothing to do with art. Shunned by all living as soon as the work of day is done, they are invested with the sinister shadows of crime and with prowling alley cats which thrive on the garbage and ordure that litter the gutters and pavements." Once inside Delaney's top floor studio, Miller was overwhelmed by chill, even at the beginning of the fall: "In a few moments, the fire died out—and remained dead for the rest of the evening. In about 20 minutes the floor became icy cold, the dead cold of cold storage in which cadavers are preserved in the morgue. We sat in our overcoats, collars turned up, hats pulled down over our ears, our hands stuffed deep in our pockets."

I once imagined that well-lit second floors would give artists a good deal of natural light, but Pat Pasloff, a veteran painter who came of age after World War II, recently assured me that any space that could be rented for retail would have been too expensive for emerging artists. Instead, artists worked in the floors yet above, customarily around 1,000 square feet, with rents under \$100 per month, often adding wood or coal stoves, or kerosene heaters to keep themselves warm at night. Even if the space was not zoned for legal residence, the artist could spend the night surreptitiously. The rules allowed a shower, but not a bathtub; a hotplate, but not a stove; and anything resembling a bed needed to be hidden away if a city building inspector knocked.

Many of these downtown artists were exhibiting in their own neighborhood—in a model duplicated decades later in SoHo. Harold Rosenberg, whose enthusiasm for his neighbors' best work was hugely influential, resided only a few blocks away on Tenth Street between Second and Third Avenues. Nearby was both the Cedar Street Tavern, where artists liked to talk and drink (and often fight, as some recall), and the Whitney Museum, then located on West Eighth Street,

where some liked to exhibit because, unlike the Museum of Modern Art, it was exclusively devoted to American work. Many lofts in this area were torn down for "urban renewal" in 1961, which marks the demise of the Abstract Expressionist movement. Compared to what became SoHo, Tenth Street was a remarkably tiny scene.

Around Coenties Slip, then on the lower East River south of Wall Street, several painters lived who a decade later became well known, including Robert Indiana, Jack Youngerman, Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, and Fred Mitchell. A building on Monroe Street on the far-eastern Lower East Side offered cheap rents to the composer John Cage and the sculptor Richard Lippold, among others. So did Chinatown, which was said to be the immediate source of the gigantic laundry bags Lee Bontecou incorporated into her sculptures.

In the early 1960s, an informal group calling itself the Artists Tenants Association petitioned the office of New York City's mayor, Robert Wagner, whose brother was an artist, for permission to reside—not just work—in districts not officially zoned for residential use. The city agreed that no more than two artists could live in such a building and that their presence would be announced on the front of the building with a sign six inches square with large letters declaring "A.I.R." for "artist in residence" and identifying the residential floors with numerals. The assumption was that the A.I.R. signs would alert firemen arriving on the scene to rescue the residents first. The buildings designated at the time for partial artist residency were largely in the West Village, the Lower East Side, the Bowery, and further uptown in Chelsea/Clinton (west 20s and 30s) and Murray Hill (east 30s). "The artists themselves did not enroll en masse, partly because they could not afford the improvements required to gain legal residential status for their lofts," notes James R. Hudson. "The artists' reluctance to participate in a program designed for their benefit and protection certainly made public officials question their willingness to be responsible citizens, to meet acceptable standards of conduct as loft tenants. Artists, after all, were [thought to be] a rather unstable lot at best, with little capital or other power to rebuild an urban area."

Compared to other Manhattan neighborhoods, SoHo appeared less conducive to habitation: the cast-iron buildings were too big, the spaces too large and too industrial, for individual artist's studios. As the buildings were individually constructed, often in disregard of those beside them, little in SoHo resembled the uniformity of, say, a row of residential brownstones. Indeed, while my co-op building has eight stories with roughly 7000 square feet on each floor, as does another resembling mine two buildings away, the structure between us has only three stories with roughly 2000 square feet apiece. SoHo had no grocery stores, no dry cleaners, no schools, no pharmacies, no libraries, no churches, and no synagogues. The only "restaurants" were pizza parlors and workers' luncheonettes that closed before sundown. The neighborhood was a 100-

acre desert. "When artists moved into SoHo left spaces, few if any of those responsible for saving the city recognized that their individual efforts could significantly change land-use patterns," notes James R. Hudson. "The entire ideology of 1950s urban renewal was based on large-scale development. [Individuals'] illegal conversion of lofts did not have any place on the agenda."

Because the neighborhood was regarded as decaying, newer entrepreneurs desiring newer premises or more acceptable addresses tended to locate elsewhere in the city; turnover in proto-SoHo was scarce. Workers came mostly from the tenement neighborhoods of the Lower East Side. Some took a city bus that even into the mid-1970s came across Prince Street only in the mornings and went back only in the afternoons across Spring Street to Delancy Street and the East River, essentially duplicating the earlier horse and battery trolleys. Another factor keeping prices low was the threat of a proposed Lower Manhattan Expressway. Owners of SoHo buildings feared they might be insufficiently compensated when their properties were demolished, much as the owners of industrial real estate in the South Bronx were ripped off only a few years before when construction of the Bruckner Expressway destroyed their neighborhoods.

One element rescuing SoHo-to-be from the lower Manhattan wrecking machine was the "Rapkin Study" prepared in 1962 by Chester Rapkin, then New York City's Commissioner of Planning. A professor at Columbia University, he had recently co-authored a book on residential renewal. In the report, officially titled *The South Houston Industrial Area*, he noted that the number of business establishments in the area had declined from 651 in 1962 to 459 in 1963, and the number of employees from 12,671 to 8,394. Nonetheless, Rapkin advised the city not to destroy the "Renaissance-style" buildings that, though visibly dingy, employed people in garment, rag, and hat industries that were important sources of tax revenues. When Rapkin died in 2001, obituaries credited him with coining the epithet SoHo in this report, although others have likewise been credited with the christening.

Landlords unable to sell were relieved to have tenants of any sort for empty spaces, often at rents that now seem ridiculously cheap, with leases extending as long as 10 years, some of them cynically assuming that artists residing illegally could be easily evicted. In that last assumption they were wrong. Prospective renters could get space that was either "raw" or renovated to various degrees. For the latter, the new renter customarily needed to pay a fixture fee, as it was called, often amounting to thousands of dollars, especially if assuming a previous lease. One common proposal around 1975 was called a "net lease" for five or 10 years; this differed from the customary rentals in making tenants fully responsible for everything except the mortgage, including maintenance, insurance, repairs,

and heat. To a landlord owning a problematic building, perhaps with building department violations or a leaky roof, this arrangement gave the landlord modest income while retaining ownership. Two strategic assumptions were that the artists, "good with their hands," knew how to make such spaces inhabitable and that the landlord could confiscate much-improved space once the lease ended.

A few pioneering artists moved into these buildings, notwithstanding M1-5 zoning (light manufacturing) that made residence illegal. "Raw space" was the epithet for a loft with cracked walls and ceilings, broken or leaky windows, an abundance of garbage, and lumpy floors. "Renovation" was the name of the procedures necessary to make it usable, if not livable. Under the discouraging surface, some artists envisioned larger workspaces and hardwood floors more sturdy than those around East Tenth Street; others appreciated the existence of elevators, even if their operators kept workday hours. Arguments were made that artists were "light manufacturers" and that they were living in "the back of the store." The definition of an artist was expanded to include those involved with theater or dance, but excluding professions that normally use work for hire and performed work in an office-like setting. Writers were also excluded. Likewise turned away were actors, who weren't, say, directors or stage designers as well.

Partly to protect the light manufacturing businesses, the city ruled that lofts with more than 3,500 square feet or less than 1,200 square feet were not available for individual artists. Likewise unavailable for residency were those located on the "Broadway corridor" between Houston and Canal Street, which were meant to be reserved for manufacturers (and later for favored retailers and the small high-tech corporations that by the 1990s gave this stretch of Broadway a new identity as "Silicon Alley"). After the early 1970s, the area from the west side of Mercer Street to the east side of West Broadway (and also north of Broome) acquired a slightly different zoning from the areas east of Mercer Street (to Lafayette Street) and south of Broome Street (to Canal Street). Whereas the former was M1-5a, the latter was M1-5b. The difference in the last letter was crucial. Whereas retail spaces could occupy the ground floors in northwest SoHo, as could bars and restaurants, ground floors in the other parts of SoHo were reserved for light manufacturing and wholesale outlets. The fact that many galleries and restaurants nonetheless opened to streets designated M1-5b reflected either an outlaw mentality or the successful efforts of a pricey lawyer. Even as late as 2002, a savings bank purportedly in New York City refused to give me a residential co-op home loan on the grounds that SoHo is still zoned for light manufacturing. As indeed it is, residential neighbors all around me notwithstanding. An Artist Certification Committee created by the city stipulated that only applicants who could explain why their work "demands a large space for its creation," to

quote the application, could obtain a "variance" to reside in the A.I.R. buildings. Approximately 3,500 people received certification.

Limiting SoHo's industrial buildings to wholesalers or light manufacturers, who were scarce, and artists, who were more plentiful, the City had made SoHo spaces artificially cheap exclusively to artists. Inadvertently it created the conditions for an artist colony whose setting was urban, not rural, with buildings that were renovated, rather than built from scratch.

III

By the early 1970s I had begun to visit SoHo art galleries. A painter friend invited me to conclude our gallery tour one Saturday at a tavern on the corner of Prince and Mercer Streets called Fanelli's that had photographs of boxers on its walls. Jonas Mekas opened the Anthology Film Archives in the ground floor of 80 Wooster Street, and the theater artist Richard Foreman used this space for several weeks to present one of his plays. I remember observing a stream of men, usually in pairs, going down Wooster Street to the Gay Activist Alliance Firehouse. Larry Qualls, later my co-op partner, remembered it later as the first gay dance hall and meeting place that was not connected to a university, a gangster-controlled tavern, or a church. In addition to offering dances, the Firehouse had on its upper floor offices and classrooms. Wherever artists went in America, homosexuals often followed, both desiring some distance, if only a few blocks, from the straight-laced world.

A few years before, I heard of George Maciunas, the originator of an American artist group called Fluxus. In addition, he was purchasing buildings that artists divided among themselves in a kind of cooperative venture. Some of those involved with Maciunas's first co-op at 80 Wooster, called Fluxhouse Cooperative II, paid less than \$10,000 for an entire floor of 4,000 square feet; once renovated and securely occupied, its value escalated over the years to several million dollars. Half-floors went for less than \$5000. In retrospect, Maciunas became one of the crucial people who made artists' SoHo possible.

Another crucial figure was a commercial real-estate agent named Jack Klein who persuaded the neighborhood landlords, burdened with empty loft spaces, to rent to artists. Two other major early movers were Paula Cooper and Ivan Karp. The former, a strikingly handsome woman then about 30, established in 1968 a gallery in a second-floor space on Prince Street. Previously, she had managed an artist cooperative gallery north of Houston Street. Karp, a frustrated novelist who had previously worked with the prominent art dealer Leo Castelli at the latter's gallery in the '70s on the Upper East Side, took the more audacious step of putting his O.K. Harris gallery on the street level of West Broadway, the neighborhood's widest thor-

oughfare. Soon afterwards, Cooper opened a ground-floor space on the northern tip of Wooster Street. Although working independently, Karp and Cooper together demonstrated that new art could not only be exhibited but, more crucially, sold in this newly credible neighborhood. None of these developments—renting, purchasing, exhibiting, selling—would have been obvious in this neighborhood only a few years before. Cooper and Karp also established less formal styles of office attire than their uptown colleagues, who tended to dress like morticians.

If Houston Street was the northern boundary of the new neighborhood, Canal Street was its southern end, with dense traffic flowing toward the Holland Tunnel into New Jersey. Canal Street had a wealth of retailers with the lowest prices in town for, say, stationery, motors, plastic displays, used office furniture, art supplies. West Broadway and Lafayette Street were natural boundaries on the west and east, because in each case the neighborhood on the other side of it was predominantly residential with an abundance of small apartments. One factor initially making SoHo safe at night, even to women walking alone in the evening, was its location between Little Italy and a mostly Italian-American turf; New York street thugs customarily avoid neighborhoods whose streets are carefully watched. Once safe, it never became unsafe. Indeed, for reasons never entirely clear to me, attractive young women told me in the 1970s that the street harassment they might suffer in midtown, say, rarely happened in SoHo. On the other hand, cars left on the street overnight, again taking advantage of industrial parking hours, were frequently broken into, I think because the absence of doormen, along with the paucity of residents, meant that few were watching the streets at 3 A.M.

As industrial buildings didn't have doorbells, an upstairs artist often installed a bell near the front door and ran a wire outdoors directly into his loft. However, since the resident lacked an electrical connection to open the floor door, he or she had to run downstairs to open the building's front door or, more conveniently, throw a key customarily inserted in a thick sock. Those residents lacking a front-door bell told prospective visitors to shout from the street. If not heard, they were advised to go to the nearest pay telephone to alert their host of their proximity. Then the host and his guests had to decide whether they wanted to be responsible for the manually operated freight elevator. The hazards seemed implicitly designed to scare off those who didn't belong in SoHo, such as building inspectors, process servers, or an artist's parents.

Some of these elevators had modest motors activated by moving a handle across a kind of bell-shaped fixture within the cab. Others, more delicately balanced, depended upon pulling on a vertical rope that passed through the cab to an array of levers. Only those inside the elevator could make it move. After-hours the residents agreed that whoever last used the elevator to get to his or her floor would be responsible for answering the next bell, taking the elevator to

whichever floor demanded it. The person on that latter floor would then first take the previous user back to his or her former floor before proceeding to his destination. If one tenant needed the elevator continuously, say for moving stuff in or out, he or she was responsible for responding to everyone else's bells, no matter where he or she was in their activity. People waiting downstairs would necessarily wait on the street.

What seemed a huge nuisance to outsiders was acceptable to young residents of such buildings. Some of these freight elevators opened directly onto the street, without even a lobby in between, better to facilitate moving heavy stuff into an industrial building. Even now, I'm still surprised by an elevator that lacks any lobby. Once a building with an archaic elevator was cooped, one of the first major expenses was installing an "automatic" cab that could be summoned to an upper floor by pressing a button on that floor. In buildings lacking elevators, the stairways were invariably rickety, their steps uneven in height and not parallel to each other, which is to say slanted, often to bothersome degrees.

Picking not only furniture but art materials off the street was a neighborhood game. Once I moved to SoHo, I found many of my bookcases on Friday evenings, which has been the designated time for putting out larger trash in my neighborhood. Almost every evening I could find skids to keep certain furniture off the floors and tubes varying in length and thickness for mailing posters and other large-format papers. The theater artist Terry O'Reilly mentions seeing a film projector lying on the street with a card attached reading, "It works," to make sure an artist would get it before the trashmen.

Dumpsters along the sidewalks, necessary for interior renovation, were also rich sources for materials that could be turned to artistic uses. "Picking over the discards from businesses became a regular nocturnal activity for those living in SoHo," writes James R. Hudson. "There even developed a certain etiquette governing the process of pawing through the discards. The first rule was not to approach any trash containers while someone else was selecting objects. It was also *de rigueur* to put the trash back into the containers when one had finished making choices." Well into the '70s the streets of SoHo were filled with piles of wood, metal, rubber, textiles, construction material.

Because most of SoHo was zoned to "protect" (favor) light manufacturing, artists preferring to sleep where they also worked were forced to resort to subterfuges. I saw with my own eye lavatories with showers but no bathtubs, kitchens with electric hot plates but no gas stoves. Beds were folded away. To alleviate such residential inconveniences, the City in the mid-'70s began, as noted before, requiring artists needing space to obtain variances to live legally in the lofts where they also worked. Visual artists were encouraged to apply, along with playwrights and composers, on the grounds that they too needed extra living/working space. Literary writers, such as myself mostly, could not qualify. Fortunately, as well as designing

books, I made some visual art. When my own application was questioned, I could offer slides and a history of exhibitions, earning official permission. In 1985 my cover was blown when my apartment was featured on the front page of the Thursday Home section of the New York Times under the heading, "Living with Too Many Books." I feared that my variance might be revoked. Fortunately, it wasn't, perhaps because few of my SoHo neighbors read the Times or any other uptown papers.

People living near a thriving bakery smelled every night too much sweet-tooth stimulus. Their neighbor Lucy Lippard wrote at the time in a description of her typical day: "12 P.M.-3 A.M.: Wake several times to tune of screeching wheels, sirens, calls on the street. The bakery workers who load pies all night holler to each other at the gleeful top of their lungs, crashing metal carts into each other. At three comes the garbage truck, louder and louder. We both wake every night at this hour, tussle with the blankets and each other's bodies, curl up right, drift back to sleep as the noise slowly subsides down the block." To avoid interruptions, I put my bedroom in the back of my loft, overlooking an alley, exchanging sunlight for quiet. When selling my loft after nearly three decades, I advertised it as "The Quietest Loft in SoHo." It was and probably still is.

SoHo resembled European cities such as Berlin, where I lived in the early 1980s, in that its streets were named in clusters reflecting a similar origin. Thus Goethestrasse was near Schillerstrasse, as well as other streets named after 19th-century German writers. Likewise, Kantstrasse crossed Leibnitzstrasse, both named after German philosophers. SoHo was one of the few New York City places whose streets were named after American generals from the Revolutionary War: Lafayette, Crosby, Greene, Wooster, along with Thompson, Sullivan, and McDougal whose names grace streets to the west of SoHo. The current exception, West Broadway, was originally named Laurens Street after Henry Laurens (1724-1792), a president of the Continental Congress. Any sophisticated Berliner could have figured that a street named after General David Wooster (1711-1777) must be near one named after the Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834).

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Provincetown Art
Association
and Museum

Summer 2003 EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

- Artists from the Sun Gallery
June 6th–July 6th
- Martha Dunigan retrospective
June 20th–August 3rd
- Dog Show invitational
June 20th–July 20th
- Joseph Kurhajec sculpture
June 27th–August 31st
- Gerrit Beneker retrospective
July 11th–September 7th
- 12 x 12 Silent Auction
July 25th–August 10th
- Philip Malicoat watercolors
August 1st–October 5th
- The Jeweler's Art:
Four Provincetown Silversmiths
August 15th–September 21st
- William Freed retrospective
In conjunction with the CMFA
September 6th–November 2nd
- Auction Preview Exhibition
September 12th–20th
- Recent Gifts to the Collection
September 26th–October 5th

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

- The Secret Garden Tour
Sunday, July 13th 10am–3pm
- Annual Consignment Auction
Saturday, September 20th 7pm
- Fredi Schiff Levin Lecture Series
Artists, Critics, Educators and more
- Music Series - Wednesday evenings
Dick Miller, Blue Door, Donna Roll
- Panel Discussions
Thursdays @ 8pm

Provincetown Art
Association and Museum

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My Borrowed Eye

BY PAULETTE BEETE

SOMETIMES I call my left eye my "dead person's eye" or "my borrowed eye." I have a keratoplasty—a corneal transplant. When my doctor told me where the cornea came from, he said "The Eye Bank." I imagined a large room, each wall a bank of shiny stainless steel refrigerators, like the ones you see in restaurant kitchens. Inside each refrigerator, I pictured rows of silver bowls mounded full of ice, ready to receive corneas as if they were delicate mounds of caviar. Each mound I decided was a chilly throne topped by a benign slice of tissue, an organic contact lens, a cornea. In my mind there was no pungent smell of preservatives or sterility. There were no bodies. Only rows and rows of bowls with their cargo winking in the lights like a miniature army of tiny, pretty fish.

Keratoconus is a degenerative disease of the cornea. Looking through my cornea used to be like trying to look through a broken microscope. Only larger shapes were visible; details never became sharp. What I wanted to look at stayed always out of focus; even as I moved closer, things were always receding into the distance.

There is no direct blood supply to the cornea so unlike major organ transplants, there is no waiting period for a blood-type specific match. There are no bags packed to go to the hospital at a moment's notice. There are no beepers. There are no anxious visits to clinics to chart the failure of the liver or lung or heart. After my ophthalmologist recommended surgery, I simply walked over to a nurse at a desk and told her the date I'd be ready. I decided on the week after Thanksgiving though it meant that I would have to miss the office Christmas party. She gave me a reminder card, said that she would contact my insurance and they'd see me at the outpatient clinic for the surgery in a few weeks.

I don't remember thinking about my donor in the weeks leading up to the operation. But as I write this I wonder who was with my donor her last night. Who was there to inscribe soothing circles into her hand? Did she spend her last minutes with her mother? Did her mother know what to do? Before the operation, when I was telling everyone at work I'd be gone for two weeks, they all asked, "Is your mother coming?" I didn't know what to say.

When I tell my mother that the date has been set for surgery, I ask, "Mom, aren't you going to come take care of me? Before she can answer, I tell her to come instead when I have a baby. I pretend that this time isn't really that important. I tell her I will stay with some friends—Stephanie, Jack, and their daughter Cassandra—for one week. These friends know the whole story: my five years of misdiagnoses; my fear of hospitals; they have seen the printed version of the irregular topography of my cornea, the confusion of colors delineating my particular cracks and distortions. My mother says, "That's good. The little girl will be happy to take care of you," not even remembering Cassandra's name.

My mother prays for me, says, "Everything is in God's hands," which doesn't cheer me because I know God will be the reason she can't come to take care of me. She will not miss attending a Sunday or Thursday or Tuesday service. She has always placed the needs of the church ahead of mine; there is no reason to expect this time to be different. I look down at the carpet as she asks Jesus' blessing. I feel the weight of my head pulling at my neck, the tight knot of my neck rising from my shoulders. There is no room to think of Jesus: I am aware only that in a few short days I won't be able to lower my head at all.

After we pray I don't have much to tell her about the operation, only that my insurance will pay for it, that I will miss two weeks of work. She doesn't ask if I've gotten a second opinion. Or if I've checked to see if there are other alternatives. She doesn't ask if I am scared or if this operation will definitely cure my disease. She doesn't question why I am so adamant about only staying with Stephanie for one week though I will be incapacitated for two.

I am disappointed that my mother can't see how much I need her although I can't say it. But I am also scared that if my mother does come to take care of me, I won't know how to let her. I don't remember ever being able to stay home from school because I was sick. I don't remember my mother ever checking my forehead for a temperature or telling someone, "I can't—my daughter's sick." As a kid, if I fell outside while playing, I was the one who soaked the cotton swab in alcohol, holding my breath as I held it to my cut knee. I'd apply my own band-aid, and later I'd rip it off, impatient to pick at the new scab underneath. My mother was an emergency room

nurse, and after she spent eight hours a day surrounded by trauma, my stomachaches or headaches weren't enough to get her attention. Over the years, in our own ways, we have both learned to do without each other.



The cornea is the lens through which we focus, through which our pictures, our views become clear. Life is actually prettier without a cornea. I was given fear-blockers prior to surgery so that I could be awake, but still unconcerned by what was actually happening. I remember the moment when the doctor lifted my damaged cornea away, after a series of quick snips, how the bright lights, the pale walls, his looming face collapsed to a kaleidoscope of vivid color. For a few minutes, all I could see was this carnival, the surgery itself receding into the distance until the new cornea was positioned in place. There was no sense of absence, just quiet wonder. For those few moments, I didn't want anything—there wasn't any scalpel biting into my eye, there wasn't any time when the anesthesia was going to wear off. For those few moments, I didn't need.

I don't know what happened to my old cornea after I let the doctor take it. I can't remember if my left eye was particularly itchy before the operation. I can't remember if it was as sensitive to light and glare. I wonder if I gave away something when I let the surgeon excise my diseased cornea. I struggle to recall my childhood; I can never quite put all the pictures in order or sharpen the details in the long dark spaces between memories. Sometimes I wonder if the reason why I can't remember is because just as I was old enough to understand I gave away one of the lenses through which I'd viewed it all.

Is there a time that my mother did stay with me that I just can't remember? Did that memory slip into one of the cracks in my cornea before it could make its way from my eye to its storage space in my brain? I know my mother left me in Guyana with my grandmother when I was eight months old so that she could take a job as a nurse in the States. I know I didn't see my mother again until I was almost three. I had my first toothache without her; I fell for the first time without her. I learned to get better without her.



The morning of my surgery, it is Stephanie who drives me to the clinic. Though I haven't eaten for several hours, my nervous bladder requires frequent trips to the bathroom. Stephanie walks with me each time until the nurse starts my IV, after which Stephanie helps me to use the bedpan. She holds my hand when the anesthesiologist knocks me out for a few minutes to administer a numbing shot to my eyeball. She doesn't laugh at me when in my drugged state I ask the nurse if it's okay to sing during my operation. She sits in the empty pre-op room holding my clothes during the hour-long procedure.

After the surgery, Stephanie takes me back to her house. My head feels heavy with the unfamil-

iar weight of the bandage swaddling my left eye. I have trouble walking because my uninjured eye can't quite hold onto the horizon without my glasses; I am off balance. Stephanie takes off my sneakers and socks, my sweat pants. As she removes each piece of clothing, I feel like a turtle, unwillingly, bit by bit, losing chunks of its shell.

The doctor has warned me not to bend over or look down at the floor. I am also not supposed to reach above my head. I can do nothing that might disturb the delicate pouch of water floating inside my eyeball, which has already been unbalanced by the surgery. Still I keep insisting, "I can do it. I can do it," even as Stephanie guides my body to the bed, supporting my weight the long minutes it takes for me to lower myself to the mattress, lifting my legs onto the bed for me and finally holding my head until I am lying all the way down.

I try to imagine my mother's hands, how she might cup them under my head, what she might murmur to soothe me. But I can only remember that my mother has nurse's hands—distant and practical.

As I sink into the bed, gingerly denting the pillows with my head, the anesthesia abruptly stops working. Under the thick thatch of bandage, there is suddenly a pencil inscribing a biting circle around the perimeter of my left cornea, re-incising every stitch the surgeon has made. I can't even groan; it hurts too much to move any part of my face. Instead I whisper to Stephanie to please call the doctor.

"Dr. Kraff, this is Paulette Beete's friend. She's in a lot of pain."

I try to pay attention to the conversation, hearing Stephanie punctuate it several times with, "But she's in a lot of pain." It seems like the pencil is now vibrating as it overscores its laborious circle. As a child, when I couldn't find scissors and wanted to cut out a picture, I would trace over and over it until I could peel the picture from the page. Now in the same way, I want to tunnel my fingers under the bandage, peel the hot circle away from the rest of my eye. But I can't feel the rest of my body, my body having been reduced to a dime sized plane of angry nerves. Both eyes are tearing, but on the left, the tears can barely make their way through the sticky rims of my left eyelid, swollen shut, heavy with pain and shock.

Finally, Stephanie kneels on the floor next to me, rubs soothing circles into the back of my hand. "He says you should just take Tylenol."

I cry harder, or as hard as I can without hurting myself even more. Cassandra brings me Tylenol and a glass of water. I can't really lift my head, so Stephanie lifts it for me. With my head



PHOTO: CHRISTINE DITHOMAS

floating in the warm womb of her hands, I can move outside the pain long enough to swallow. Then the pain is there again, furious and vengeful. I can't focus. I can only surrender. I try to think, "This will feel better tomorrow," without counting how many long hours remain to be plodded through until then.

Stephanie murmurs over and over, "You've been very brave. You are very brave."



Now I remember how then the pain in my eye insisted, a little like my hunger for my mother, a little like a tattoo needle. I wondered what was being written there—I am a brave girl. I am a brave girl—my skin having long been pummeled to the right density to tolerate such a message. I think now that my own body was trying to mother the

grafted cornea, even though I didn't know how to accept mothering for myself. My eye knew that it needed this new cornea, needed the ache and sting of it in order to see. My eye knew what I didn't; I needed this borrowed eye to set the example.

Now, almost six years later, my cornea is again starting to stretch and crack itself. I think sometimes that I might have to get another transplant. Though the incidence of rejection for corneal transplants is almost none, there is still that possibility. Or perhaps, even without rejection, my new cornea will deteriorate to the point where it too has to be replaced. And though my right eye has stayed stable since my first diagnosis five years ago, it is always possible that it will begin its own relentless decline. Will I get another keratoplasty? Will my mother come and stay with me this time?

I think I was expecting that in writing this I would somehow be able to fill in the details of the photograph, that I would definitively be able to say, "Here is what I learned lying there in that bed. Here is the meaning of that tattoo, the meaning of need." I remember thinking that this initial surgery would be life changing, if only because I had never had surgery before. Yet looking through my journals, I can't find anything written about it at all. I wasn't even really sure when it happened. It was only by counting backwards from when I moved to Provincetown, that I was able to establish that this happened in 1997. Perhaps the reason I didn't want to write anything down is because this is a story about how sharpening the details sometimes reveals only absence.

We are made of needs. Our bodies are complex webs of desires—for food, for shelter, for touch. Our bodies never learn to live without; even in the case of amputation, they still remember what it is that is missing.

I wonder, when I die, especially if it is sudden, how the doctors will know that my left cornea isn't really mine? Can you reuse a cornea, passing it from person to person, a treasured family heirloom? "Here take this cornea. I saw *Almost Famous* three times with it." "Here, take this cornea. I saw a whale autopsied on a Cape Cod beach with it."

On my donor card I'd like to list the things I want to keep as well as what I'm willing to give away. I'm willing to give away my heart, my lungs, my liver. I'm willing to give away the way I never learned to need my mother. I'm willing to give away this absence lying between us like a deep, dark lake. But I want to keep this cornea, imperfect as it's becoming. I want to believe that it's better to be in that aching, stinging place where maybe she and I can learn to follow the lead of our bodies. To trust our bodies' counsel. To take our bodies' advice.

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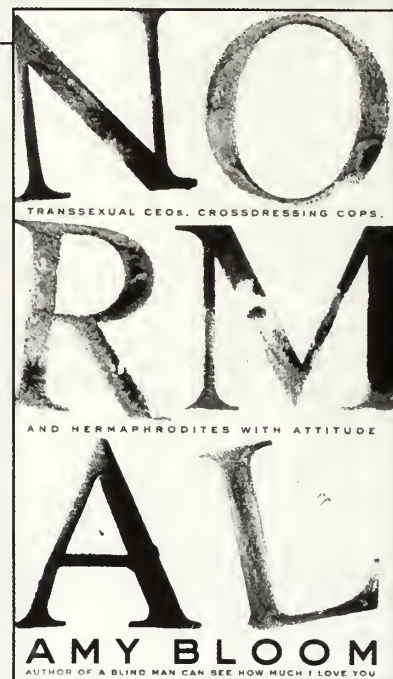
Locating Normal

A CONVERSATION WITH AMY BLOOM

BY ANDREW GOTTLIEB

A

MY BLOOM'S new nonfiction book *Normal* was released in 2002 (Random House). Bloom's previous works include a novel, *Love Invents Us*, and two collections of stories, *A Blind Man Can See How Much I Love You*, and *Come to Me*, a finalist for the National Book Award. Her work has appeared in both the Best American Short Story and O'Henry Prize Story collections, and several anthologies including the Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction, as well as in many publications including *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Story*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Zoetrope*, and *Antaeus*. A former practicing psychotherapist, she currently lives and writes in Connecticut where she teaches at Yale.



ANDREW GOTTLIEB: You were a psychotherapist for a long time. Were you writing before you were a therapist?

AMY BLOOM: I didn't begin writing until about ten years ago. I was a psychotherapist for fifteen years before I started writing. I don't think there's much crossover. There are very few psychotherapists who are writing, and I don't think too many writers think, "Oh I know, I won't teach in an MFA program, I'll become a psychotherapist." I think the things they have in common are that if you're not a good observer, you're not going to be good at either one. If you're not a good listener, you're probably not good at either one. And if you don't find humans endlessly interesting, you're not going to be good at either one. I don't think writing in and of itself is therapeutic. Sometimes it's damaging. Psychotherapy can be creative, but it's always creativity in the service of someone's actual health. It's not self-centered.

AG: It seems like both skills require a strong sense of empathy.

AB: Yes, I think you have to have a real innate capacity for empathy, and I don't think you learn that as a psychotherapist. You either have it or you don't. Empathetic people are often drawn to that field. And I think it's useful for a writer.

AG: Do you get the same sense of helping people from writing that you do from sitting in a room and listening?

AB: No. There are times when people say, "That's helpful," but sometimes writing makes them angry or upset. But I'm not writing for somebody in particular. I'm writing because I write and I want to be read, but psychotherapy is pretty focused in the service of another human being.

AG: The subject matter of stories like "Psychoanalysis Changed My Life," or "Silver Water," might lead your readers to think you're drawing on material from your work. But you're not?

AB: I think three out of 20 stories have therapists in them. And I don't see how that could



Basically, I write for a living.

AG: You've had the benefit of experiencing both worlds: you began writing on your own, but now are teaching as an academic. What do you see as the greatest advantage of a writing classroom or workshop?

AB: The off chance that someone will say something true about your work that you've never heard before. Or that you'll hear a familiar criticism in a new way and be able to see a problem more clearly. Less likely, your own intention and intelligence shape that solution. For people who like community, the workshop offers that possibility. Of course, it also offers the possibility of a shark tank, so there you are.

AG: How do you moderate between the shark tank and the

goldfish bowl? What's your teaching style like?

AB: I don't think MFA programs or college courses are truly designed to separate the wheat from chaff. They're supposed to teach and make people better. Otherwise, they should do like law school (in the old days) and tell everyone who applies that the person to their left and right will be gone by spring. My goal is civilized discourse, intelligent reading, and remarks that are helpful. I prefer not to have people repeat what others have said, and therefore use Richard McCann's British device of having people rap their knuckles in assent when they had planned to say what someone else is saying. The occasional chorus of knuckle rapping can be far more effective than 15 people saying the same thing. I grade hard with my undergraduates and I warn them that I do, but I'm also glad to meet with them often and e-mail regularly, as they wish. I cannot grade on talent, but I do grade on how hard they work to make the most of what they have. Sometimes, as in life, very gifted and lazy people have gotten lower grades than slightly less gifted people who worked hard, thought critically about their writing, and did some serious adjustment. I don't allow people to abuse each other in my class, nor do I abuse my students. Some people, teachers and students, like that sort of thing. I don't, even when it's tempting.

AG: We seem to be at a point where writers today will almost inevitably have the experience of an MFA and a workshop. A good thing, a bad thing?

AB: Although more and more people go to writing programs—as more and more people between 22 and 32 have the wherewithal to do so—I imagine that lots of writers will continue to come from wherever writers came from before there were MFA programs. Some great writers have passed through MFA programs,

and lots of not so great. I don't know that MFA programs make great writers, nor do I think they destroy great writers. At best, they provide a fine opportunity, which is not a small thing.

AG: What do you think accounts for the swell in MFA programs we've witnessed over the past two decades—a situation where supply greatly overwhelms demand. Is there a greater need to explore an art like writing?

AB: In a society in which you're expected to have college degrees for jobs that in no way require nor even make use of such degrees, it's inevitable we have a swelling supply of MFA programs in all sorts of things no one imagined 40 years ago. Dramaturges and directors, poets and dancers: most of these were not jobs for which one had a master's degree. I suppose it's part of our increased specialization—I kind of prefer insurance agent-poet and longshoreman-novelist and even poet-playwright-copywriter, because I like the mishmash and the mix of things that come with occupations and vocations other than writer-teacher—not that there's anything wrong with that and I'm grateful for every teaching paycheck, when I teach.

AG: You've seen how the workshop can benefit students. What about writers writing alone, without the support of that community?

AB: I don't really think there's any other kind. Some one can get your attention, show you a piece of fine writing, kick your ass, but in the end, it's you and the blank paper and reading, reading, reading.

AG: Has teaching changed your writing?

AB: I think, as time passes and I write more, I get better at it. Perhaps teaching makes me more aware of all the pitfalls and more aware of the need to get down to work, when I have the opportunity.

AG: What do you read while you're writing? Does it depend upon the genre you're working on?

AB: When I'm working on a project, I try to stick to Alan Furst, P.D. George, and the like. Sometimes I read old favorites by dead writers. Occasionally, by accident, I read contemporary fiction but if it's great, it makes me a little nervous and dubious of my own project. If it's terrible, I just doubt the whole enterprise and the industry. I always read poetry. I love poetry, I don't write it. I've read poetry my whole life. I was a little kid reading A.A. Milne, or *Favorite Poems for Six-Year Olds*, or something like that.

AG: Has poetry affected your fiction, and would most fiction writers benefit from an understanding of prosody?

AB: Poets say that they can tell I read poetry. Poetry is a great model for fiction in many, many ways. The compression and the clarity,

be the case for anybody with any sense of moral decency at all. It would be unthinkable. There are not that many human stories and what makes them distinctive are the details, and the details are the thing you cannot share. I don't see how you could ever write about your patients.

AG: How do you address the line between work and life experience?

AB: It's not even a line. It's just such a walled off area, the area that is my patients' stories. The answer I always give when people ask me about that is, "When you go visit your grandmother in the hospital, and you walk by some dying lady with a gold bracelet on, are you tempted to steal it?" Most of us wouldn't be. That's how it feels to me. It's not borrowing. It's not okay. It's stealing. With psychotherapy, there's a contract. It's not like you ran into someone in the supermarket.

AG: What made you start writing?

AB: I don't really know. I've chosen not to poke around in that too carefully. I was on my way to becoming a psychoanalyst and one day came home from a meeting with my training analyst, and I started writing notes for a mystery on a McDonald's box in my car, and I thought, "Oh. Look at this." And then I just went on writing. It's all very mysterious and I guess I'd just as soon keep it that way,

AG: Will you miss psychotherapy?

AB: I do miss it. I miss it already. I have a very small practice now and only see people that I've seen for many, many years. I can't do the kind of work I used to do. Seeing someone a couple times a week for several years. I'm away, I travel, I don't really want to be available to that extent.

and getting the maximum mileage out of the fewest words. I think that's always a good idea. I like Mark Doty. Carolyn Forché. Jane Hirshfield. I loved Don Hall's book, *Without*. I thought that was extraordinary.

AG: The line between fiction and poetry seems clear for you. Some writers write both, and are stronger at one than the other. Others don't.

AB: I know that I will not, in the same way that I'm pretty sure I'll never have a career as a prima ballerina. [Laughter] I'm not a poet. I have great admiration for it, but I'm not a poet anymore than I'm an opera singer. It's that clear a line to me. I love to be in the presence of it.

AG: Do you ever see yourself writing in the memoir genre?

AB: Nope. It holds no interest for me at all. I have no wish and no need to tell my story.

AG: What have you thought as the past decade witnessed a flood of memoir in the market?

AB: I have read one great, great memoir in my life, which was Geoffrey Wolff's *Duke of Deception*, which I think is just a brilliant book. Just exceptional in every way. And I really liked Alec Guinness's autobiography of himself as an actor. I think it's called *Blessings in Disguise*. Charming. I think some memoirs are good, some are not so good, some are interesting and well written, but whatever is the impulse for that, I guess I just don't have it.

AG: What makes audiences watching talk shows and reading 'truth' leap for it so readily? Something about modern society? Or are things no different?

AB: It's probably no different. Just as one's ready to deplore how vulgar and venal contemporary American society is, all you have to do is remember the gladiator fights. I don't think there's a lot new under the sun. We just come up with new forums. People are drawn to stories and they like the idea that it really happened to somebody. That it's really true. And presumably people do a lot of identifying in a way that makes 'truth' more accessible for them than fiction.

AG: The characterization or categorization of fiction and memoir is that one's false and one's true, when in fact both contain both conventions.

AB: Fiction says: what is true here has been recast and I can make it whatever I wish, and I take responsibility for everything that is on this page. Memoir says: these are things that are all rooted in fact except that it's as I remember it, and therefore of course it isn't true. Although I'm not sure that that's what the people who write memoirs say. Memory is a great liar. When I read memoirs, I assume

that I'm reading—on some level—fiction. How could it be any other way?

AG: What made you shift to nonfiction with the project that became your new book, *Normal*—three long and fascinating essays exploring transsexuals, crossdressers, and hermaphrodites or the intersexed—after two story collections and a novel?

AB: Really, the interest of my publisher. They had liked the long piece I'd done for the *New Yorker* on female to male transsexuals, and prompted me to write about other issues around gender, and I said, "Okay," and then I realized how much work it would be. The first essay was a shorter version of the one that's in the book.

AG: And the other two essays took longer?

AB: Oh absolutely. I started that book before I wrote the second collection of stories. But I just didn't want to do that much traveling at the time. And I felt more compelled to write the fiction. Then the nonfiction started to shape up and I was glad to do it, but as sort of a small book. I didn't want to try to write an encyclopedia of gender identity.

AG: The essays maintain the feel of stories because of the way you've written the people in them rather than simply data.

AB: There's information I wanted to convey, but I thought if it was possible to help people who were not inside these worlds and who are not necessarily ideologically committed in any way to think and see these things differently, then that's what I wanted to do.

AG: How is writing nonfiction different from fiction?

AB: You have to create the narrative arc, the tension, and bring the characters to life, but it's very different because they're real people, and they have feelings about what you write, and you have relationships with them.

AG: Does that make it harder to write?

AB: I think so. I had to forget that the people I was writing about might read what I wrote. I had to write it anyway. Sometimes I really liked the people I was writing about, and I knew they'd like what I was writing. Sometimes I knew they would not like it.

AG: *Normal* forces readers to question their beliefs about genre and sexuality. Is it going to take a long time for some of these ideas and understandings to gain acceptance in mainstream society?

AB: It says that it's a lot more complicated than people like to think. And yes, look at how long it took for people in this country to

begin to get comfortable with the idea that it was all right for black people and white people to have sex and get married. Comfortable with the idea that women could vote without destroying their essential femininity. It's reasonable to think it's going to take awhile to come to terms with the fact that a lot of the ways we mislabel people are simply misleading and done to avoid anxiety rather than to provide clarification. It'll come, but it'll be slow in coming.

AG: So, male crossdressers are really just trying to wear clothes they'll feel good in and without negative reaction, much in the way no one looks twice at a woman in a suit or tie. When you compare what people wore in the seventies with what's acceptable now, maybe change will be quicker.

AB: Sure. Consider that longhaired men enraged people in the '60s. People were violent about it. Long hair made men feminine, and it was unnatural, which is very funny as if long hair wouldn't be the only natural state. But the issue of gender identity and labeling and particularly the anxiety generated by men who are not masculine in ways we feel comfortable with. It's gonna be awhile. I don't think it will drop off the screen in the next six to eight years. But it will change eventually. When you go to a college, you see that kids are a lot more open about these issues, and fool around with it a lot more, and consider it a much more elastic issue than kids did 20 years ago.

AG: What part of your research surprised you most?

AB: Oh gosh, lots of things surprised me which is why it was so great to do the book. I feel like there were so many things I didn't know. It surprised me that the heterosexual crossdressers really were heterosexual. It surprised me that there were so many transsexual men and women who just blended into the landscape and were never heard from again, you know, as transsexuals, because they just passed and looked right and went on with their lives. It surprised me how much unnecessary surgery was performed on intersexed infants and how little input families often had on that decision until very, very recently. And it also surprised me how much of what we consider to be standard, "men are like this, women are like that," is hormones. It's not something immutable and magic. It's hormones. Things can slide in the other direction if you give them hormones.

AG: So an easily changed balance of chemicals dictates your average human being's gender?

AB: If you give your average man female hormones or vice versa, it will change them. We think of being a man as sort of written in stone, that it's all a certain kind of package, and the truth is it is all, for men and women, fluctuat-

ing hormones. The roll of the dice, how you're blessed—or cursed—anatomically, things like that.

AG: When you first get into the book, my assumption was that it would be about being gay, or gay communities and people, but it seems like there's actually no correlation between homosexuality and gender or sexual desire.

AB: To know someone's sexual orientation is to know one thing about him or her. And the more sophisticated we become in society, we know it's to know only one thing. If you're having a beer with a guy, and he says, "I like women," you don't feel like, "Ah, now I really know who he is." All you know, is okay, he's a heterosexual guy. It's the same if the guy says, "I like guys." You might think you would actually know stuff about him, but you wouldn't. You would know exactly that much about him. They're not connected.

AG: Society's perceptions make huge assumptions about identity and sexuality.

AB: We make assumptions about everybody because it makes us more comfortable. It's like thinking all the planets move around the earth. It's reassuring, even if it's not true.

AG: In the end, *Normal* points to the idea that humans have more commonalities than differences. How would you sum that up?

AB: There are common human emotions, predicaments, and patterns from childhood to adulthood to old age. These are much larger and more central issues to people's identity than some of these other issues that we choose to focus on as being significant.

AG: Much of the pain in the book, or in the reading of the book, comes from the way some of these communities of people are forced to hide what they're dealing with.

AB: The shame and the loss. And the fact that even if crossdressing was publicly acceptable, it doesn't mean that the wives of these men would be delighted with it. It might be less painful and less frightening and less of a struggle, but it doesn't mean it would be the choice of the wives. But maybe if the guys weren't ashamed of it, or felt the need to hide it, they would have told their wives in the first place. And they could have married women who were comfortable with it.

AG: So it would remain more of a lifestyle choice like your cereal preference.

AB: Or I like to sail, he likes to ski. He's a Catholic and I'm a Jew. He likes the country and I like the city. Choices that are not necessarily compatible, but not incompatible either.

AG: In a way you've taken a community often shrouded in silence and oppression and provided a voice. Did you appreciate this?

AB: I didn't feel like that voice. There are a lot of transsexual writers who publish autobiographies and essays. Maybe the only group who I felt hadn't been heard from were the wives of crossdressers. Overall, I think I was happy to put their voices on the page. Not my voice for them, but their voices. To let them talk and capture some of that. But it is true I felt more invested in wanting to do this right, than if, say, it was a book about gardening.

AG: Considering your other work, *Normal* does seem similar in that it's taking subjects out of the mainstream and showing us how normal they really are. Various relationships, sexual desires, often taboo topics.

AB: That's probably true. It is always interesting to me what it is that people want to avert their eyes from. Sometimes those things are scary, sometimes they're unusual, sometimes they're just everyday things and people just find it hard to look.

AG: Was some of the research shocking?

AB: There's not much I don't believe. But there were times when somebody was in a lot of pain, or crying during an interview, or when the way someone presented themselves and how I saw them were different, and it was painful for me to be with them.

AG: Did you leave anything out?

AB: No. Sometimes I tried to find a more gentle way of saying what I wanted to say, but the choice was always to put it in and maybe think about how to put it, than to leave it out. It's true in the females-to-male transsexual piece, there are a lot of female-to-male transsexual people who I found not very appealing, physically or psychologically, and I tended to focus on people I found more likeable. I felt there was plenty of representation in the press of weird transsexuals.

AG: Have you gotten feedback yet from various communities or audiences about the book and its reception?

AB: I got invited to be the keynote speaker at a crossdressers' banquet in the spring. And I've had some transsexuals say, "You have no right to write this book," cause if you're not a transsexual you don't know anything about it. And I say, yeah, that's why I'm writing as an outsider. A couple of angry letters from crossdressers who were upset that I had suggested that wives of crossdressers were not universally happy. Lots of letters from wives saying, "No one has ever described my situation." On the whole the groups of people that I wrote about responded really positively. And the wider, mainstream, general readership seemed to respond pretty well to it. A friend said, "That was really fascinating. A lot of information. Sometimes hard to read about." Surgeries, things like that. Which I understand.

AG: What about among the medical community? Will doctors get their hands on this and come to realizations? Any gender or identity classes?

AB: I think so. I know it's been read by a lot of pediatricians and psychiatrists and psychologists. I expect the classes will happen when it comes out in paperback. (Laughs.)

AG: Were you able to write fiction at the same time you were putting *Normal* together?

AB: What did I do while I was doing that? I wrote a screenplay and I wrote a short story, but mostly I just did that for awhile. I wrote some magazine articles to pay the bills.

AG: Do you have more nonfiction projects or are you back at fiction?

AB: I'm back to fiction. Fiction and a screenplay and a good old-fashioned play. Those are the things that are sitting in front of me.

AG: Anything we'll see soon?

AB: [Laughter] Oh, probably not. I'm not a very fast writer.

ANDREW GOTTLIEB's poetry, fiction, and interviews have appeared in *American Literary Review*, *Poets and Writers*, *Seattle Review*, and other journals. This summer he is Artist in Residence at Isle Royale National Park in Michigan.

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My Frida

BY HARRIET ROSE REISEN

Discovering Frida



ENTRY TO THE BLUE HOUSE, COYOACAN

TWENTY YEARS AGO, from an art magazine cover on a newsstand across a busy street, a Frida Kahlo self-portrait bewitched me. The story inside mentioned a Kahlo exhibit in New York. Like a magician's stooge carrying out a post-hypnotic suggestion, I got on a southbound train from Boston to see it.

Sometimes I think I dreamed that show. Frida's most famous paintings filled room after room, and I had all of them to myself. Not one person entered the gallery while I was there. I don't recall even a guard. A few pictures had been reproduced in the magazine article, most in black-and-white, but all the rest surprised and amazed me. Being alone with so many of her paintings was like secretly reading Kahlo's hidden diaries. Her life seemed laid bare, with nothing omitted. She had even pictured her conception, with the anatomical fidelity of a medical illustration, in the schematic "My Grandparents, My Parents, and I." The tiny sperm and egg appeared below Kahlo's Mexican and Hungarian Jewish progenitors, presiding from clouds over a blue house in whose courtyard Frida stood, as a happy, naked four-year-old. The Blue House was where Frida was born and would die. Other paintings depicted way stations of her life—her crippling trolley accident, her marriage to Diego Rivera, her bleak sojourn in the United States, her abortion. The aggregation of psychological self-portraits—of a Frida surrounded by shorn tresses coiling like snakes, of a Frida with three monkeys, of two Fridas linked by a snipped artery—was a dizzying hall of mirrors. That jet-wing-browed face staring from the lurid settings resembled my own reflection—could have been the face of a sister, or a mask of my own. The tortured artist, the suffering body, the self-absorbed personality were very like the private me, riveting and repellent, compelling and alienating, self-loving and self-hating. Over the next 20 years a great number of private selves would find their reflections in Frida Kahlo's, but in the empty gallery, discovering her work

felt like stumbling upon King Tut's tomb.

I forced myself to consider Kahlo from a greater distance, with detachment. Ah, she paints something like a Surrealist, I observed. I don't much like Surrealism, find it facile, kitschy. Droopy timepieces and Martianish landscapes with meanings that stimulate like reheated coffee: the persistence of memory, yeah; the barren inner world, so what. But Kahlo's surrealist pictures were free of conceit or spurious mystery. They were full of antic incident, and they were about my own preoccupations—family, friends, love, and corporeal concerns. When Kahlo's female bodies were undressed they were naked, not nude; not reclining but giving birth or having surgery or getting knifed. Modern painting was supposed to be abstract and cerebral, big and cool, good in a corporate boardroom. Frida Kahlo's modernism was confessional, folksy, and as hot as an ardent inamorata.

I was a cult of one (as far as I knew), with no fuel for my eternal flame, until later that year, when Hayden Herrera published her Kahlo biography. I devoured it as I would a beach book.

Herrera's Frida was a great artist and a great personality, seductive and brazen, flamboyant and free, expansive and generous. Her social life was a variant of my earliest ambition, to be what I thought was called a "salon lady," an admired and desired hostess to the brilliant minds of the day. Kahlo spent a lot of time hanging out with gorgeous movie stars—Paulette Goddard, Dolores del Rio, Jorge Negrete; running with an influential crowd—Nelson Rockefeller and Claire Booth Luce; hob-nobbing with art world nabobs like Isamo Noguchi, Andre Breton, and Tina Modotti; having as houseguest Leon Trotsky and as husband the monarch of the muralists, Diego Rivera.

Frida's brilliant personal style was beyond fashion. She glorified her "flaws," leaving her unified eyebrows un-tweezed. She improved upon the facts of her life by lopping three years off her age, making her birth coincident with the birth of the Mexican Revolution. Her

dress was indigenous, a politically correct statement of Mexican identity, as well as timeless, bright, artful, and cheap. Her clothes flattered her coloring and figure: although Frida's Indian ancestors were Zapotec, she wore Tehuana dress. I suspect she went that kind of native because the Tehuana silhouette was slim-waisted and full-skirted, like the contemporary New Look of Dior.

Decked out in party costumes, junk jewelry jingling, Kahlo smoked reefer whenever, boozed, cursed, observed no silly taboos about sex, and didn't smile for the camera. She lived for animal pleasure in treasure-crammed rooms not in good taste, rooting for the underdog right or wrong. She was just this side of a wacko floozy, narcissistic without apology, nonetheless beloved. A picaresque hero in drag, as vulgar and outrageous as I wanted to be, Frida did what I wished I could get away with.

Admiration and envy are selective, of course. I didn't covet Frida's florid medical history, but appreciated her gallant attitude toward the nasty tricks of physical injury and female anatomy, trying to conquer them, confronting them in her painting. Although Frida suffered, she was nobody's victim but Lady Luck's.

I discovered Kahlo when I did because of my attachment to Mexico, born on the hippie trail, and made companionable via marriage to Tony Kahn, who as the son of an expatriate screenwriter in flight from the blacklist, had spent a significant chunk of his childhood in Cuernavaca. Tony's Spanish was perfect, and his understanding of Mexican ways was deep. We vacationed and honeymooned in Mexico, and after we adopted a baby in Guadalajara in 1986, decided to return every year. We bunked with families in various towns while I learned to speak Spanish (more or less), our son got familiar with his prehistory, and Tony squired us expertly.

One day during our first family visit to Mexico City in 1989, Tony and I left our toddler to play

with local grandchildren of the blacklist while we made pilgrimages. My shrine was Frida Kahlo's Blue House, a museum then open only a few hours a week, and Tony's was Trotsky's place right around the corner. (Not by coincidence: Diego Rivera had sponsored the Russian revolutionary's exile to Mexico, sheltering Trotsky and his wife Natalia in the Blue House for two years. Frida became Trotsky's lover, or rather Trotsky became one of hers.)

Tony and I reached Coyoacan, a quiet, shady enclave long favored by bohemians and intellectuals, via a long, wild ride in Mexico City's horrendous traffic. The cab driver had never heard of Frida Kahlo, so he dropped us off at Trotsky's house. The place was shut tight as a fortress. We set out on foot for the Blue House, which was also closed, although it was supposed to be open. *Muy Mexicano*. We rang the bell repeatedly. *Muy gringo*. Finally a willowy teenage girl opened the door a crack and told us to come another time. We wouldn't be able to come back for years! I begged and pleaded, complaining stupidly that the place was supposed to be open. Tony simply offered a *mordida*, a little bribe or "bite," which did the trick. The door opened and the gorgeous girl went back to the garden to lock lips with a luscious young man. Tony and I roamed the house unescorted, turning lights on in each room. We jumped when they illuminated Frida's decorated surgical corset where she had lain on her bed of pain, then bounced off the mirror under the canopy where the painter studied her subject: herself.

When we flicked on the kitchen switch, "Frida" and "Diego" lit up on tiled walls and counters, and a festive conglomeration of pots and utensils appeared. One room—probably a salon—was emptied of all but paintings dropped up against the walls on the floor. Upstairs, in Kahlo's studio, her wheelchair sat before her easel. Her brushes and paints were laid out as if she and Diego were out at the nearby market or visiting friends. When we were satisfied that we had seen the house, we rested in the garden and listened to the birds, as if we were awaiting their return.

On our next trip to Mexico City Tony and I visited Frida and Diego's pink and blue studios in the lush, hilly neighborhood of San Angel. Very little had been taken away. Rivera's giant plaster and wire Judas figures filled the corners of his studio, and his enormous shoes were by his chair. Art detritus lay on the shelves. A portrait of a socialite (his staple source of money and sex) sat on an easel.

The director of the place came out—we were his only visitors—and gossiped with us about the old man, who was a good 20 years Frida's senior. Tony had a choice anecdote. The Butler family, blacklist friends of the Kahns, had lived next door to the studios in the '50s. Their teenage son, Mike, was learning to play the trumpet at the time of

Rivera's last illness. Rivera's maid asked the butler's maid to have the boy practice quietly. There is no way to play a trumpet quietly. Mike (who grew up to be a screenwriter) moved to the side of the house, took out his harmonica, and played a calypso tune that Harry Belafonte had made popular. During his last moments, the Rivera maid later reported to the butler maid, the maestro heard the boy's soft rendition of "Jamaica Farewell." Its mournful chorus began, "Sad to say, I'm on my way, won't be back for many a day."

Frida Manifestations

In 1991, the first evidence of Kahlo reached Cambridge. From the Rio Grande border state of Texas, the Houston Opera Company brought a production of *Frida*, by Richard Rodriguez, to the Loeb Theater. A friend of the Kahn family from their Mexican period, a former actress named Erzsi Valyi, was visiting us from Hungary at the time and went with Tony and me to the theater. At last I had a Kahlo companion—better than that, a witness to her life. Erzsi was Frida's contemporary, had met her at parties. The Communist Riveras were part of the social group of artistic exiles—the blacklisted Americans and the Spanish Civil War refugees. Over dinner she told us about her stay in 1950 at the Mexico City hospital where Frida spent the entire year. Erzsi's room across the hall was the best seat in the house for observing the daily Kahlo-Rivera drama. Kahlo watched cowboy movies on a projector and screen brought in by Diego, while her husband had his way with a nurse in the room he kept next to his wife's. Erzsi told us that Rivera had asked permission to paint her exquisite teenage daughter. Under no circumstances would she agree to leave Kathy alone with that lecher.

The house at the Loeb was two-thirds empty, and from conversations we overheard during

intermission, the audience consisted mainly of subscribers who were entertained but not enchanted. Erzsi thought the score was first class, and as the daughter of a legendary Budapest opera diva, she should know. We all thought the sets and costumes, the giant puppets, and the human performers were marvelous. From where we sat, way up front and surrounded by empty seats, the extravagant show, mounted with Mexican *alegría* (loosely, "joyful intensity"), seemed to exist for our benefit alone. Sometimes I think I dreamed that, too.

Finally in 1992 Corazon Sangrante was the theme of an Institute of Contemporary Art exhibit that included Frida's painting, "The Bleeding Heart"—herself as a deer with an arrow lodged in its heart. One evening the Mexican performance artist Astrid Haddad appeared at the museum. Her showstopper was an impersonation of a one-legged drunken Frida in a parody of a torch song of the "please hurt me again" variety.

Other works inspired by Kahlo began to appear. Three respected novelists took the material of Kahlo's life and used it freely, the way Shakespeare drew upon the lives of English kings. One of them told Frida's story from her sister Cristina's point of view. A second emphasized politics and revolution—the Trotsky angle. A third attempted to channel Frida's thoughts, in whopper paragraphs like these: "I was in perpetual pause. A stasis where I memorized lies. Insomnia is identical in all seasons, rancid as soiled bandages, the pus on gauze." Kahlo's life story was at risk of becoming hagiography. In many of the 25 book-length accounts that followed Herrera's, Frida turns into a feminist martyr.

Awareness of Frida Kahlo grew. Robert de Niro and Laurie Anderson bought paintings. For several years, Madonna mentioned a Kahlo movie project in every interview; Kahlo barely escaped Madonna's attempt to play her. Jennifer Lopez



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tried, and fortunately, failed to produce a Frida biopic. Finally, Salma Hayek, a Mexican actress, had the good taste to hire Julie Taymor to direct her in the role. Composer Elliott Golden-thal (Taymor's husband) wrote an outstanding score for the film. Exposure of moviegoers to Frida appears to have pushed the Kahlo phenomenon over what's called "the tipping point," the critical indication of the outbreak of an epidemic.

Fridamania

The film *Frida* propelled Fridamania to new heights. You can enter a Frida look-alike contest. You can buy Frida bottle-cap earrings, Frida refrigerator magnets, Frida key chains, Frida mouse-pads, Frida posters, Frida paper dolls, Frida jigsaw puzzles, Frida cookbooks, Frida T-shirts, Frida tattoos, and Frida calendars. A Google search for "Frida Kahlo" yields 54,900 results and several dedicated websites. One website lets you mix'n match Frida's wardrobe, and notes that she "dated" Trotsky as well as Dolores del Rio, Isamu Noguchi, and Georgia O'Keefe. What does one wear on a date with Trotsky?

Until this year I saw no evidence of Frida awareness in Mexico, but Hayek's movie raised her visibility, and this year I saw it everywhere. The supremely adaptable craftspeople of her native country have seized upon a profitable new motif. Especially popular are interpretations of "The Broken Column," a gruesome

image of Frida wearing a surgical corset and cupping her breasts like a Renaissance wench. In her exposed abdominal cavity her spine is represented as a broken Doric column. In Metepec this winter you could buy a painted clay version of "The Broken Column" as a half life-size sculpture by folk artist Tirburcio Sorteno, one of Mexico's official "Living Treasures." The culture's taste for gore, so often displayed on the bloody crucifixions that decorate the churches, has found a new outlet.

I went to Frida's pink and Diego's blue studio last winter. Only Rivera's tiny bedroom was the way I remembered it. The portrait on his easel, his huge overalls, the work shoes—all had vanished. Frida Kahlo became an icon of Mexico, like the Virgin of Guadalupe, the sombrero, the peasant on a burro, skeletons, mariachis, and the nopal cactus.

A show like the one I saw in 1983 may never again be possible. The paintings have become too sought-after and expensive. "My Birth," for instance, belongs to Madonna, and she may not feel like lending it soon. Erszi Valyi visits one elderly New Yorker who commissioned a portrait from Kahlo. She can't afford insurance coverage of its value and so, Erzsi tells us, she hardly ever leaves her apartment.

HARRIET ROSE REISEN's writing appears on public television and radio, in print, and as song lyrics. She summers with her husband, Tony Kahn, in Triuro.





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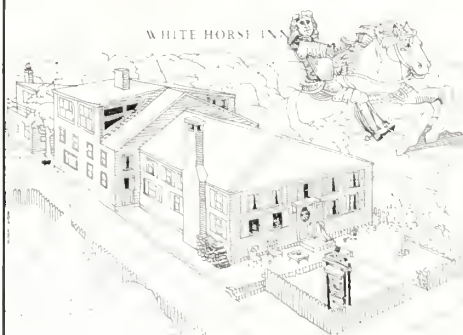
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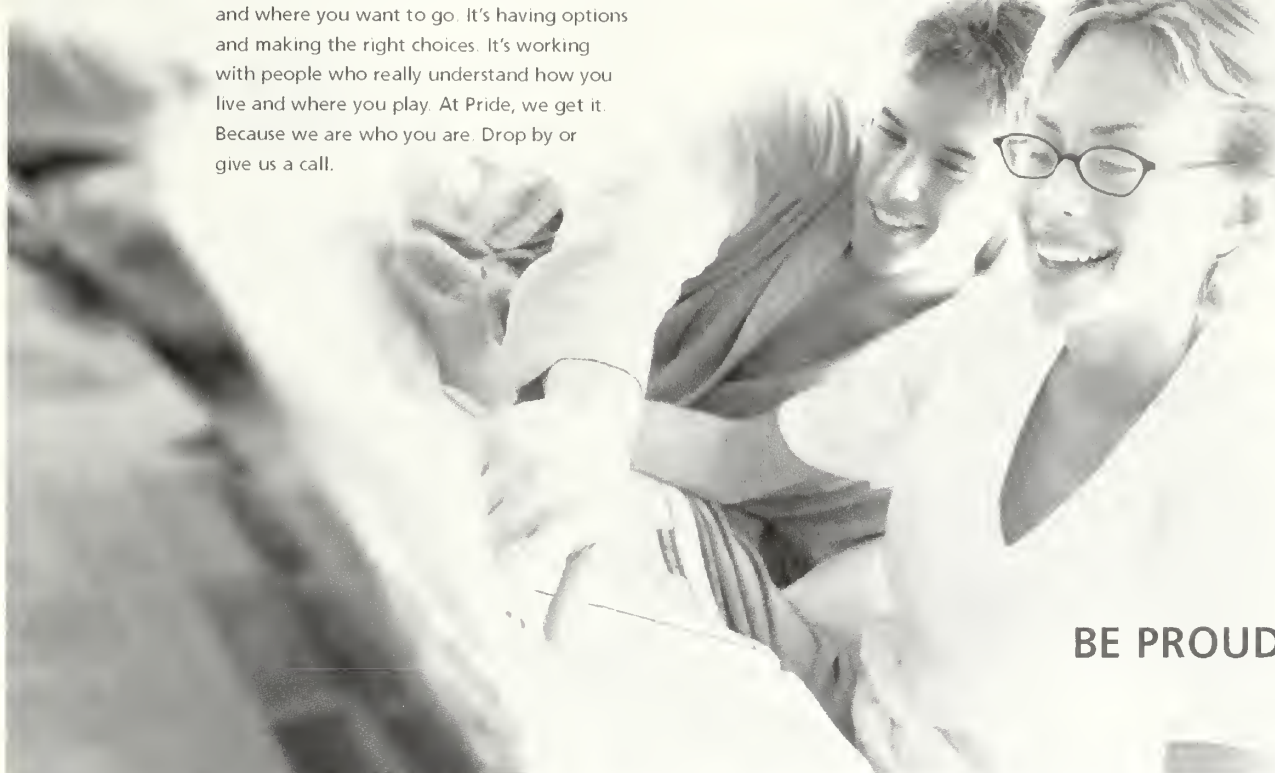
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Pearl

by Mary Gordon

My mother is a wind, rushing
My mother is a burning bush.
My mother is a lion, running, and I was always by her side.
My mother is distractable.
I have left my mother.
My mother is the voice, "I am."
Soon I will be invisible, but only to myself.
I do not know who my father is.

The Answering Machine

We might as well begin with the ride home. It is Christmas Night, 1998. The ending of a day that was not unseasonable, except in its failure to fulfill the sentimental wish for spur-of-the-moment snow. The sky: gray, the air: cold, with a high of thirty-three degrees Fahrenheit. Palpable winter but not winter at its worst. Perhaps fewer of the poor than usual died on that day of causes traceable to the weather. Perhaps the relatively unimpressive showing of weather-related deaths was due to the relative clemency of the air, the relative windlessness, the relative benevolence that could be counted on by the poor to last, perhaps eight days, December 24th right through the first of January.

10 P.M. Christmas night. Four friends drive south on the way home after a day of celebration. They have had Christmas dinner at the house of friends, a weekend and vacation house in the mountains north of New York. One couple sits in the front and the other in the back of a brown Honda Accord. They are all in their fifties. All of their children are on other continents: one in Brazil, working on an irrigation project, one in Japan, teaching English, one in Ireland studying the Irish language at Trinity College. They were determined not to have a melancholy Christmas, and for the most part, they have not.

They leave Maria Meyers off first since she lives in the most northerly part of the city, or as they would say, the farthest uptown.

She opens the door of her apartment on the sixth or top floor of a building on the corner of La Salle St. and Claremont Avenue, a block west of Broadway, a block south of 125th St., on the margins of Harlem, at the tip end of the force field of Columbia University. Before she takes off her brown boots lined with tan fur, her green down coat, her rose-colored scarf, her wool beret, also rose, she sees the red light of her answering machine.

Her heart lifts. She reads the red light as a message from her daughter who has not, after all, forgotten to call on Christmas. She probably thought her mother would be home all day; Christmas has never been anywhere but at home.

In the darkness, seeing with clarity one thing only: the blinking red light that means her daughter's voice, Maria knows that when she flips the light switch she will be illuminating an abode nothing like the house she grew up in. Purposely, deliberately unlike. Walls painted orange-yellow. Art made only by simple people, art brought home from her travels; woven fabrics from Guatemala, a Mexican mask, carved wooden angels—green and pink—from Czechoslovakia, and from Cambodia, a place she has not been, a tin demon, her protector.

She drapes her coat, her hat, her scarf, over the chair covered with a slipcover the color of a green apple. She sits on the footrest in front of it, sits on the woven triangles of magenta, cobalt, rust. She takes off her boots, which made her feet so uncomfortably overheated in the car. She is greedy for the sound of her daughter's voice: her greed a tooth that bites down hard. Her stocking feet are slippery on the pine floor, they make her move more slowly to the answering machine than she would like. She'd been more hurt than she wanted to admit that Pearl hadn't returned her call, hadn't made contact before she left for the countryside. But that was what she'd wanted, wasn't it: a daughter who did not feel obligated, who felt free to pursue her life, her interests, her pleasures, her adventures. She imagined Pearl sitting in a basement kitchen around a table of students toasting one another in cheap red wine, filling plate after plate with spaghetti they had made together. Or maybe it wasn't spaghetti; she didn't know what cheap meal Irish students chose to celebrate their liberation from the domestic cliché of family Christmas. Pearl had said she would be with friends for Christmas. "No one's family?" Maria had said. "I don't know anyone's family here,"

Pearl had said, and Maria had thought, well, that is being young.

But it is not her daughter's voice she hears on the answering machine. It is a strange voice, a woman's voice, a voice with a Southern accent.

"This is the State Department in Washington. We're looking for Maria Meyers, the mother of Pearl Meyers. This is an emergency. You can call toll free."

E-M-E-R-G-E-N-C-Y

The word makes her believe she has lived her life all wrong. The familiar walls, the furniture of the apartment are threatening to her, offer her no comfort.

State Department. The official world. Run by men like her father. And where is her father now? She wants her father, dead twenty-four years, dying thousands of miles away from her, estranged. She says his name. Father. Then tries to unsay it. She tells herself to be calm. She breathes in and out; the breathing technique she learned for giving birth. She focuses her dislike on the voice of the machine. The name she is supposed to call. *Lynne Craig, Lynne Craig*

She tells herself that she has never liked anyone named Lynne. She focuses her rage on the coquettish Southern voice. What kind of voice is that for the State Department?

The walls stretch and thin. She is entirely alone. She would like to call Joseph, but Joseph is in Rome. It is five in the morning Roman time. She tells herself that of course she must do this alone, it is no one else's affair. She has never doubted her own strength. It would be nice to have Joseph beside her, but as this is impossible, she defines it as unnecessary. This is the kind of woman Maria is: impatient with the word "impossible." It is true, very true, Maria is not a patient woman. She is a woman who believes in action. And now I will tell you the story of Joseph and Maria. Your first thought might be that they are lovers. Having learned that they are not, you might imagine they are blood relations. Brother and sister might be the first category that would come to mind. They are neither lovers nor siblings: they are friends. Neither has a memory of life without the other. And what is a life without the memory of a life? Joseph's mother was housekeeper to Maria and her father: Maria's mother having died before Maria was two years old. Joseph cannot forget that he is the son of a servant. Maria never thinks of it.

Lynne Craig. Maria says the name to herself. What kind of name is that? What kind of name is that for a diplomat? If you were expecting a serious future for your daughter, would you name her Lynne? It is obvious to Maria that everyone knows that you would not name a daughter Lynne if you expected her to grow up serious.

Her daughter's name has always been something she was proud of. She always relished people's surprise when they heard it.

What's the baby's name?

Pearl.

A disappointed look. Wanting to say, "that's no name for a baby," people would say, "unusual."

"It's my mother's name," Maria would say.

Then people would say, "Oh yes, of course." Forgiving her for something.

A toll free number. As if paying the toll would prevent someone's making a call to the State Department when they'd been told it was an emergency. She tries to imagine a person for whom a toll free number would, in such circumstances, make a difference. She cannot. She loses confidence in the ability of someone who would invent such a procedure to save her child. This frightens her: she cannot trust the people who are said to be in charge. And, unusually for her, she does not know what to do.

The Toll Free Number

Maria dials the number. The tone beeps. She tries to imagine the State Department. She sees official buildings, but they could be anywhere, in any city, at any time since the mid-nineteenth century. She sees her young self and her friends demonstrating in front of such buildings in the dark years of the '60s. In those years, the people in those buildings had been the enemy. Now they are her only hope. Therefore they are dear to her. Therefore she hates them. They know something, possibly unbearable, that she does not know. Something about her daughter. Something that she needs to know.

She gets, on the fifth ring, *Lynne Craig*.

"Mrs. Meyers?"

"It's Ms."

This is the kind of woman Maria is. She has heard the word "emergency," and yet she insists on not being misnamed. She is not married; she wants to make that clear. She is a person who believes it is one of her strengths: making things clear. We will see what has come of this; we will see what is to come.

"Yes, well, Ms. Meyers, M'am, we have a bit of an unusual situation over there in Dublin. A little bit of an unusual situation that your daughter's gotten herself involved in."

"Is she all right?"

"Well, we hope she will be."

"What exactly do you mean by that?"

"Well, as I said, your daughter's gotten herself into a little bit of an unusual situation. She's chained herself to the door of the American Embassy over there in Dublin. She says she hasn't eaten in six weeks, and she's refusing food and drink."

"Why is she doing it?" She knows that she must try to understand. If there is a logical progression, it will be comprehensible. Therefore some action can be begun.

"Well, at first, Ms. Meyers, because it's Dublin and because of the particular situation over there with the Irish politics and all, we supposed she was involved with the IRA over there. You know, there's a group over there very opposed to the peace treaty that's being worked out over there, very vocal about their opposition, more than vocal in some cases. But that doesn't seem to be

the case with your daughter. IRA involvement. She wrote a kind of statement that she left on the ground by where she's lying. It's a bit confusing, Ms. Meyers. We think she's doing what she's doing because some young boy died and she considers herself responsible. And then she's in favor of the peace treaty, she says she wants to die and witness that. We can't make much sense of it, and she won't talk. Now she's written a letter to you and to a Mr. Kasperman. It says personal and confidential but if you were willing we could read it to you now.

"Medical help will be given to her?" Maria says.

"Yes."

In that case, we must respect her wishes. If the letters are confidential it means they're for our eyes only. Just take the proper medical steps and wait for me to get there.

"Yes, m'am, whatever you say. Does she have any history of mental instability?"

"Of course not."

"Well, Mrs. Meyers, as this is a kind of unusual situation, we'd have to ask that kind of question. Any political involvement?"

"As long as I've known her she's been only marginally aware of politics. She's interested in language. She's studying linguistics. She's in Ireland to study the Irish language."

"Yes, m'am. Well, you see, she has some connections there that are of some concern. There's a young man there, a kind of involvement, who has interests, connections with certain radical groups. But they all seem to disavow any connection with what your daughter's doing. They say it's just an isolated act of a disturbed individual."

"My daughter is not disturbed. She's in danger, and I'd like to know what you're doing about it."

"Well, right at the moment M'am, we're trying to be in dialogue with her. But she doesn't seem very receptive to that. But I'll tell you the truth M'am, she's very weak and we're afraid of injuring her if we try to remove the chains by force if she resists. So we're sort of hoping she'll remove the chains herself."

"Isn't it cold there?"

"Yes, M'am, we have some concerns about that. They seem to be taking some measures, some heaters I think have been set up. But our greatest concern is that she won't drink. You know, they can survive this kind of thing without eating, but the drinking's crucial. We're worried about dehydration. We've set up heaters around her so she's warm, she can't stop us doing that."

"Then get the chains off without hurting her."

"That seems to be the problem right now. She's resisting us pretty strongly there. We're trying to avoid force. Of course, if she gets much weaker, she won't be able to resist."

Maria doesn't know what to hope for, that her daughter will weaken enough so that she won't be able to resist, or that she will retain her strength. How is it possible to wish that your child will weaken? Yet she knows that is what she must wish, only she doesn't know how to form

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the wish. She has never had this experience before in her life: she has always known exactly what to wish for. She has often believed that her wishes would be granted, or that, if not, she would be able to live with their having been refused. But now she does not know how she must live. Or how she would live if anything should happen to her daughter. Her daughter, who is in danger now.

"We were hoping you might be able to have some kind of leverage with her if you were on site."

"I'll be on the next plane."

"I've taken the liberty of booking you a hotel in the Aylesbury Park Gate. Any cab at the airport will know. Of course, you'll want to stop by the embassy first. Speak to Miss Caroline Woolf."

The relief of no longer hearing Lynne Craig's voice floods her body. But only momentarily. Then she wants to vomit, as if, opening her mouth, the horror of what she heard might spill out, like a medieval allegory, a sinner spewing out devils, sin.

But she cannot waste time thinking of herself as a figure of allegory. Her daughter is in danger. Her daughter is doing something she doesn't understand. She can't even form a picture. Why can't they remove the chains? She is an impatient woman, and she doesn't understand. Not

being able to understand has always made her feel trapped, suffocated. She wants to claw against this incomprehension. She wants to make Lynne Craig say something that will allow her to understand.

"And we've booked you a seat on the next available flight. There are only first class seats left on the six p.m. flight."

First class. Six P.M. Thousands of dollars. Eighteen hours.

She packs her bag.

The Transatlantic Call

She waits until midnight, when it is six A.M. in Rome.

She has a little Italian, enough to ask for Mr. Kasperman in the hotel Santa Chiara, where she has stayed many times, first with her father, then with her father, and Joseph, then with Joseph and Devorah his wife, and then with them and Pearl. Now he is there alone. Devorah and her father are dead. She will not allow herself to think that Pearl might be dying.

Joseph answers the phone and she tells him about what Lynne Craig said. How she dislikes Lynne Craig, how she dislikes the State Department and her toll free number. How she dislikes having to depend on the State Department for anything. Particularly anything important.

"Why is she doing it?"

"It's something about a boy who died, whose death she feels responsible for. And something about being a witness to the importance of the Peace Treaty. I don't understand."

Two half-orphans, brought up together, a tie not of blood or sex. A tie of friendship. Friendship from the start of memory. He always wanted to make her happy, but if he thought something was important, that she wasn't quite telling the truth or allowing herself to see the truth, he would go silent. No matter how much he knew what she wanted to hear.

How well we know each other, she wants to say, we have had each other all our lives. But it isn't the sort of thing she says any more; it's the sort of thing she has made a point of not saying because it is the sort of thing she is tempted to say, the sort of thing she'd said too much when she was young. She has worked hard to moderate herself, to modify the overly dramatic gesture, the overly dramatic line. She believes she has succeeded."

"Joseph," she says, "I just don't understand."

She asks a question simply for the magic value of spoken words.

"Do you think she'll die?"

And he says the thing she needs to hear, which she knows he believes, because he doesn't say what he does not think is the truth.

"No, I don't think she'll die," he says. "You won't let her."

Pearl is an excerpt from Mary Gordon's forthcoming novel. In August she will present an evening as the distinguished lecturer at Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill.

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Linda Busby Parker



The Sum of Augusts is a saga of a black man, Brewster McAtee, and his family and is set in the mythical rural, community of Low Ridge, Alabama, located halfway between Birmingham and Montgomery. The novel spans the years 1954-1994. Brewster is a man who desires what every man wants: the opportunity to better himself and his family and to give and receive love. The Civil Rights Movement explodes around him and he is caught in the cross-fire. Ultimately, when he loses that which is most precious to him, he must find the answer to the question: how can a man continue to live after losing that which he valued most?

This excerpt is from the first chapter of the novel and depicts the death of Brewster's brother Tee-

Boy, who reappears in the novel in ghostly form as he directs the actions of his brother, the novel's protagonist, Brewster McAtee.

Brewster had not wanted to go to DuBose. The place was too dark. You couldn't see trouble coming and DuBose himself shot two boys who flashed knives and drew blood that looked like liquid gold in the dim amber lights strung on black cords across the center of the room. But he went to watch out for TeeBoy because he was young and hotheaded, always had been. It was Saturday night, and DuBose had the blues sliding like hot, sweet syrup with the High Steps playing, and the man on the trombone blowing notes slick, curvy, and smooth. Brewster had three whiskies, no ice, and he had Antonette, whose shoulders were thick, but soft as butter.

Mr. Trombone was blowing something that sounded like Charlie Patton's blues, but was easy to move to and TeeBoy was with the jivers from Happy Landing, the flophouse off Limrick Road that had a red neon sign out front, but the "d" in Landing had been burned out since the red-lettered sign went up.

"That place for rovin' niggers," Mama Tee said. "Steer clear 'round that place."

But TeeBoy was at DuBose with the Happy Landing crowd and a couple of discharged military boys who still wore uniforms. Brewster told TeeBoy not to play pool with the soldier-boys because they thought they were something in those uniforms, but the outfits didn't have any merit because they were old enough to have moth holes eaten clean through the wool, but there he was, playing pool with the Happy Landing boys and the would-be soldiers. When the piano player started with short, free and easy notes, TeeBoy headed for the platform. His body moved to the fast beat, looking like he was in the air, not on the floor. His feet were lifting short steps, clean as glass.

TeeBoy was laughing with his head back and his eyes looking into the soft gold lights. Three

girls tapped their feet and twisted their bodies at the edge of the raised floor, waiting for their chance to glide into the yellow light with TeeBoy. Brewster went outside to get some air and let the breeze wash the smoke out of his eyes. He sat on the fender of his truck, lit a cigarette, and listened to the music drift past the rafters. He slapped the beat against his thigh and he thought about going back inside, sliding in alongside Antonette, tasting her sweet neck and pressing his fingers into the full, soft flesh at her hips. That's when the door blew open with TeeBoy in the middle of the pack from Happy Landing. The door shattered and pieces flew in the air. Brewster saw TeeBoy pinned against the wall by two of the Happy Landing boys and he jumped from the truck, but his legs were in slow motion. He ran toward TeeBoy and he could see himself running, like he hovered above himself. He was running, running, no sound, running toward TeeBoy. One of the boys drew the knife, the blade burnishing a silver streak in the dim light of the bare bulb over the door. The boy's elbow drew back, the hand flew out, the fist tight around the handle. Brewster saw the thrust, but he didn't see the blood yet because he was running and watching himself. He saw TeeBoy stagger, fall to his knees and lean backwards at an awful angle.

"Shit, man, shit," were the first sounds he heard when he was knocked off balance by the military boys running in a pack. A path cleared before him and he saw TeeBoy on the concrete, hunched on his elbow, looking down at the blood that flowed from his chest so fast there was nothing that could stop it. TeeBoy didn't scream; he laid his head back and his eyes glazed like liquid glass was poured over them, and they froze in place. Brewster knelt beside TeeBoy trying to catch the blood, putting his hands on TeeBoy's shirt, over TeeBoy's heart, pushing the wound together, but the blood came up over his fingers, warm and red-orchid in the light of the naked

bulb. The blood soaked TeeBoy's shirt, ran down on the concrete slab, and ran behind TeeBoy's head and off into the dirt. The crowd fleeing DuBose stepped in the dark orchid flow, making bloody footprints on the concrete and on the dirt, and all the time Brewster tried to push the slit together to hold life inside TeeBoy's body.

Three men wrapped TeeBoy in a tablecloth. Brewster climbed on the truck bed of his pickup, put his arms out and the men handed TeeBoy to him, wrapped tightly in the white linen. Old Man Malone drove. Brewster cradled his brother in his lap, holding him like a child, cupping his right hand around his brother's hand, feeling the coolness in TeeBoy's fingers, watching the red stain grow in an uneven circle on the white cloth. Old Man Malone slowed at the traffic light on State Street and Brewster shouted toward the cab, "Don't stop, Malone. Ain't nobody on the road. Don't stop, man!" Malone stepped on the pedal and Brewster's head jerked, hitting the back window of the cab, but he held TeeBoy, cushioned him like a baby.

"Hold on! I'm holding on, TeeBoy. You hold on! Hold on!" Brewster's voice crashed through darkness, then murmured in dull chant and all the while he felt the coolness of TeeBoy's hand.

Old Man Malone pulled Brewster's truck to the colored door of Low Ridge County Hospital. He hopped out of the cab, leaving the door of the truck standing open. "We got a man been cut," he shouted into the hallway of the hospital and he rushed back to help Brewster unload his brother.

A woman in a tall nurse's cap stuck her head out the door. "You'll have to wait for a colored orderly. I'll call for one." She put her head in and closed the door.

Old Malone was comic now. He ran back to the door, his feet lifting high, his thin legs almost dancing, his red suspenders marking his path. He opened the door to the waiting room. "We got a dying man here. He needs a doctor right away." Old Malone jiggled back to the truck bed, but the woman in the cap put her head out again.

"I can't let you in. The colored orderly will be here in a minute. He'll take him to the colored room. I've called Dr. Hamilton. You'll have to wait." She said this sharply and she pulled the door shut with force.

Josiah Hamilton, the only Negro doctor in the county, had his office in his house, not a great distance from the hospital. Brewster lifted his brother's head, cradling it close to his chest.

"The doctor's coming, TeeBoy, but it don't matter. Don't you worry. Whatever's going to happen is going to happen anyhow. Don't you worry." He wrapped his arms around his brother, giving TeeBoy's body some warmth, but all the while feeling the coolness of TeeBoy and the wetness of blood that soaked his own shirt and pants. He rocked his brother back and forth as a mother does a small child. He felt the smallness of TeeBoy's shoulder and the heaviness of TeeBoy's head, which he cradled in the bend of his elbow, and he felt also the chasm that opened up inside himself, a bottomless, dark gorge. He longed for TeeBoy even while he held him.

Old Man Malone paced wildly by the truck,

cursing and spitting, but Brewster rested his shoulders against the back of the cab and pulled TeeBoy's head up under his chin. He closed his eyes and pressed TeeBoy's body against his own. He felt no rush. He wanted to hold TeeBoy. He wanted TeeBoy to feel his arms tight around him, but when he took TeeBoy's hand again, there was no grip in it. It held the coolness of death.

"What time you got, Malone?"

"What you say?"

"Time, what time, Malone?"

"Don't know the time." Malone paced by the truck.

"Find out from that nurse."

"Hell, don't matter," Malone shouted. "Doctor be here soon. Don't matter."

"Damn, Malone, find out from that nurse what time it is!" Malone jiggled a path to the door again, summoning the nurse.

Forty-five minutes past one, Sunday morning, October 7, 1954, three days before his sixteenth birthday, TeeBoy slipped away. Brewster left the hospital walking in blackness too thick for breathing, too deep even for weeping.

Intro and excerpt from The Sum of Augusts, an unpublished novel by Linda Busby Parker, winner of the 2002 James Jones First Novel Fellowship.

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Burning Sailor Boy

by Katherine Vaz

ONE MORNING, my brother, Nicolas, after surviving Vietnam, four years in the Navy, made the only mistake of his life. He leaned

out of a cable car in the requisite pose of the carefree, pole grasped lightly in one hand, hello buckled hills, hello fair breeze, and he fell and died. My father's hair bleached bone-white and his teeth dropped out, one by one, and vanished into the dotted broken spines that divide every road into halves.

When my friend, Lucy, gave me a doll named Sailor Boy, my father threw him into the fire. His plastic head snapped and shot a poison into the house. His blue glass eyes detonated. Daddy stirred Sailor Boy into the hillock of ash left over from Christmas, but he didn't see the golden buttons that refused to burn, because thereafter he was blind.

I found Momma bobbing in the depths of Aquatic Cove. Her face rose up to fit inside my own reflection, laid gently on the water's surface as if testing its weight to hold me. I screamed as her face soaked inside mine. Because I did not want her to pull me down where she was.

I climbed Powell Street to the Cable Car Power Station, such a steep incline that a decade flowed in and flowed out as I watched the cables glide in for repairs. They go round and round in a loop inside silver tracks in the streets and then come in needing to be spliced with other wire-rope cables. They wear out so easily while the pretty cars teeter on swimmingly with their gold lace fretting and burgundy trim and Rice-a-Roni ads, the herbs magnified by color-dots . . . the cars have a clutch underneath that sinks inside the tracks to grip the cables . . . and the brakeman creates friction by yanking hard on the gears until you can just about hear the passengers and the cable and the mysterious gripping thing hidden below cry out while stars and sparks fly in a blue-white aureole. And then we stop.

I could eat the cars up, they fascinate me, I can't get enough of them. It's near to freezing, who cares. The brakeman's veins swell like string that wraps his arms inside and out. The best brakemen sing. I tap my feet. At home the heat baked Daddy into a pudding, and the voices of neighbors stab through the walls and straight into him, testing without mercy to see if he's done.

A woman once knocked her skull senseless against a pole during a sudden stop. She sued



IN LIMBO BY ANNA POOR

the cable-car company because her injury let loose a sexual frenzy that she found humiliating. She won! A true story.

I called out my stop to the brakeman. The car dove from sight without me, taking my marriage with it, goodbye, but I was still far from home; I climbed into the car of a man I worshipped. Words streamed out of me because you see I thought all I had to do was tell him who I had been. We drank wine and to keep him from staring into the distance, I kissed him without let-up and squeezed his flesh and held on and rode the hardness of him and wept myself stupid. He apologized for being absent. I could not break his faraway gaze. "This has nothing to do with you, Sally," he said, his arms still around me in the car. He loved someone else but poor missing soul she wouldn't leave her husband, or some such, I only half-heard because I leapt away singed, face inflamed, my blood hot enough to pour my insides over him in a way that was hardly winning; what he said was true. And then he was gone.

I could see my time so clearly then, starboard to port, my puddle of a body stuck who knows where in-between. Maybe it's in a tinderbox, sprouting damp paws clawing at the sides now that I'm sunk too low to reach the top.

Mostly I lie quietly, letting what is true come and go in waves.

Why shouldn't he flee from one of those red-eyed little sharp-nailed newts that live half in water, half in fire?

KATHERINE VAZ, a Briggs-Copeland Lecturer at Harvard University (beginning Fall 2003), is the author of the critically acclaimed novel *Saudade* (St. Martin's Press, 1994), the first contemporary novel about Portuguese Americans from a major New York publisher. Her second novel, *Mariana*, translated into five languages, is presently a best seller in Portugal.

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William Corbett

Fanny Howe and I kicked off the series never imagining that it would run into 2002 and beyond. Why us? Because we are Gail's contemporaries, because she thought we'd draw a crowd, because we'd accept \$40 apiece? Yes, yes and glad to get the money. The reading was in a sort of courtyard where the audience sat at small tables. Don't know how many times I've read in the series. Remembering reading *Columbus Square Journal* beginning to end; reading Bill Zavatsky (we had an hilarious—Bill provided the hilarity—ride over in Ben and Judy Watkins's van), the Halloween readings; reminiscing on stage with Gail at the 20th anniversary; reading last March with Ed Barrett from the work of Zoland Books writers, but I've blanked out at least a half-dozen other of my readings in the series. Why the blank? I think my memory has been partially erased by the Blacksmith's refusal, which I endorse, to keep records. Let the scholars, if there be any in the future, discover who read when, etc. That's their business. Gail's, and mine while I assisted her, was to present readings.

Of the readings I presented I remember Barbara Guest's first and only Cambridge reading; Bernadette Mayer drinking a Rolling Rock beer while she read; Nate Mackey's reading with Eamon Greenan and Eamon being flabbergasted by Nate's work; an evening of 20th century Italian poetry with Boston art dealer Mario Diacono; a Paul Celan evening with his co-translators, one of whom confided in me that she did not know German, but that I should not say so; two evenings of

Rudy Burckhardt movies; a reading to celebrate Geoffrey Young's Figures Press which is memorable because the readers posed for a photograph, the only photograph of a Blacksmith event that I have. The readers: John Godfrey seated at the piano then on the B-smith stage, Stephen Roderfer, Geoffrey Young, Johanna Drucker, Clark Coolidge, Steve Benson, Kit Robinson, me, and John Wieners whom we invited on stage.

I remember Kenward Elmslie accompanied by Steven Taylor with overhead visuals by Joe Brainard. At one point Elmslie and Taylor dressed up as maids. Ben Watkins took a few photographs of them in their act.

I remember introducing Seamus Heaney the night he gave a benefit reading for the Irish magazine/press *Field Day*. I think we charged \$12.50 (much back and forth between Gail and I about this) admission and were amazed and delighted when we took in over \$1,000. I remember the groaning lady and Sam Shepard's son in the audience. I was in the audience the night a deranged John Wieners read wearing a summery woman's dress over his clothes.

I remember Mike Mazur's slide show of his work and wishing more artists were involved in the series.

I remember the night Charlie Simic read and his wife Helen, Marie Heaney, several others and myself couldn't get in. We went to the Casablanca to have drinks and wait for Charlie and Seamus. All of us at the bar agreed that it was one of the best readings we had ever been to.

Stanley Kunitz

I want to join in celebrating Gail Mazur's brave adventure in founding and administering the Blacksmith House Poetry Series and in celebrating her poems as well.

They can't and won't take them away from her.

It was a privilege and a joy to participate in Gail's series. I still remember that wonderfully informed and responsive Blacksmith House audience.

With Much Love,
Stanley

Mark Halliday

Standing at the Blacksmith podium, I felt I was at a pinnacle of significance that could not be matched by any other venue anywhere, including New York City and the afterlife.

Audiences at the Blacksmith often contained so much literary force that they (along with the person reading) caused the entire room to jiggle loose from the building's foundation and fly up to a secret cloud temple four miles above Boston. We all slid off our seats slightly as the room came down for a landing when the reading ended and we all tried to act like ordinary people.



ABOVE: SEAMUS HEANEY, JANE SHORE AND FRANK BIDART AT THE BLACKSMITH HOUSE. FACING PAGE: LLOYD SCHWARTZ AND GAIL MAZUR AT THE MARKET THEATER IN MAY 2002, CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF BLACKSMITH HOUSE READINGS.

Peter Davison

In the early 1970s poets around Boston were thinner on the ground than today, and perhaps less "professional." The heyday of the late 1950s, when half the talented poets in America seemed to have settled in and around Boston, had passed, as poet after poet departed for other regions. Robert Frost had died in 1963; Richard Wilbur migrated to Connecticut; Donald Hall to Michigan; Maxine Kumin to New Hampshire; Philip Booth to Maine. Anne Sexton was still here, but struggling with the demons that drove her to suicide in 1974. L. E. Sissman was writing copiously for the *New Yorker* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. Those poets who had passed through in the '50s, like Sylvia Plath, W. S. Merwin, Adrienne Rich, and Stanley Kunitz, had moved on. Robert Lowell had taken up residence in New York but was still teaching at Harvard a day or two a week, and quite a number of young acolytes grouped themselves around him. Among the poets who sat at Lowell's feet (some eager, some frustrated) in the early '70s were Fanny Howe, Greystiel Gowrie, James Tate, James Atlas, Richard Tillinghast, and others. Robert Fitzgerald was Boylston Professor at Harvard; James Randall governed the writing program at Emerson; Philip Levine was teaching at Tufts; Allen Grossman presided at Brandeis; Derek Walcott, Geoffrey Hill, Robert Pinsky, and Rosanna Warren had not yet adorned Boston University.

Gail Mazur, who with her husband Michael had a nose for climate in the arts, knew that Cambridge would never cease from attracting those who wanted to write poetry; and that an agora where new poetry by the locals, or by touring visitors, could be heard would be bound to serve as a magnet. The various provisions for formal poetry readings—Harvard, Boston College, Boston University, Brandeis, and the other institutions—served the academy more than they served the aspirants who were actually writing.

The Blacksmith House was where a poet came to participate in the life of new American poetry. The crowds may not have been large, but they were warm. Those who attended were less concerned with making a "career" in poetry than we are today, with our anxieties about university appointments, tenure, fellowships, and all that. In those days it was less clear that poets had any chance at all of professional payment, advancement, or security. Poets like Robert Lowell, the recipient of a trust fund, were rare. I think, perhaps wishfully or sentimentally, that the pursuit of

poetry had more heart in it then and less visible worldly ambition.

Gail managed to bring to Brattle Street people from all over the country, nearly always people who wrote well, people who wrote provocatively, people who had won or were winning a reputation, people who earned the hearing of their peers—people who did not always cast their poems in the prevailing modes of the workshops of the time. At first few of the poets spent their time in workshops at all.

In 1972, having published several books and edited a number of other peoples' volumes, I was made poetry editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and I soon found it very much worth my while to drop in on Monday nights to learn what was going on. I remember hearing not only poets whom I had already read and admired, like George Starbuck or Robert Hass, James Tate, Carolyn Forché, Louise Glück or William Alfred, but poets like Ellen Bryant Voigt, Gerard Malanga or Tess Gallagher or Robert Pinsky, whom I wanted to get the flavor of, whom I was curious about and a sense of whom I first encountered there. Gail was extremely generous in inviting me to read from my own books too. There were fewer poets around in those days, and the evenings mostly were devoted to one poet at a time. The listeners comprised a fairly faithful crowd of fellow-makers, poets and would-be poets who were finding their own ways. Cambridge had not yet arrived at the era of overpopulation in poetry, with readings in every bookstore, every library, and every bar, and the notion of Performance Poetry hadn't yet emerged as a form of social therapy.

I remember most of my readings at the Blacksmith House with satisfaction: those who came there were the best audience in town. The only better ones I encountered anywhere were in monasteries or prisons, where listeners had had a lot of time to think. The poems I wrote and read in those days were honest and painful, painful to me at least. We had learned too well from the poetry of Robert Lowell and Anne Sexton to display our intimacies, making literal use of them to further the intensity of poetic utterance. I don't know how many other poets employed their work this way: I am not so sure now as I was then that the outright expression of suffering could guarantee authenticity in poetry. A reading I gave for Gail in 1981 spelled the end of confessional poetry for me. I now heeded Robert Frost's repeated warning to poets: "not too much of the sadness."

Jennifer Rose

Although I was Gail Mazur's assistant for a few years in the 1980s, my most vivid memories of the Blacksmith House Series are from the '70s, when I first attended readings there as a high school student. I remember sitting at tables in the darkened café listening to a now-forgotten poet. I remember eavesdropping on the commentary and gossip as the audience made its way out into the Harvard Square night and feeling the thrill of being in the presence of live poets.

It was sometime then that there was a reading or announcement of a reading of poems by a young poet who had recently killed himself. I was impressed that there was a community of poets who had cared about this young man, known his work—which I gathered was unpublished—and would now do what it could to make sure that the work was given its full due. I had already found a community of poets on the page, but these were poets in the flesh, and I was excited to think that someday I might grow up to be part of them.

For me, the Blacksmith Series and Gail will always be part of the old Harvard Square, the one before chain stores and business meetings instead of poetry readings. I can see Gail having a quick dinner at Cardell's cafeteria before a reading. I remember special après-reading drinks at the Harvest. I think of the Blue Parrot, the Bookcase, the Tasty, Cronin's, old haunts now only part of urban archeology and, perhaps, some poems. But the magic of the Blacksmith readings comes back to me now like the magic of the movies in so many childhood memories—the lights dim, the stage filled with another, lyrical, imaginary world, this one made by the cinematography and special effects of words. And there is Gail to introduce it all, with her Marilyn Monroe voice and Veronica Lake hair, her Bakelite bracelets and oddly shy stage presence.

When I think back to that time and recall the many reading series and venues—Passim, where I heard Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky read/perform; the Hundred Flowers Bookstore; Stone Soup; among many others—I'm struck by how few have survived intact, except for the Blacksmith. I think this is the result of Gail's commitment, through many decades. I remember one reading in a classroom, while construction was happening all around us. Carolyn Forché was the valiant reader that night. There is a metaphor in this, of course: that Gail was able to adapt to new challenges and new configurations—of sponsorship, of poets, of her own writing and teaching—and still make the series work.

I will always treasure Gail's tradition of Halloween and Valentine's Day readings; including classics and thematic poems by unknowns as an enjoyable and valuable break from the purely personal and contemporary readings. I will also always be grateful for Gail's support of young poets. Not only did she nurture many of us as her assistants, as audience members and as guests at gracious after-reading parties, but she was also generous enough to invite young poets to read at the Blacksmith, an honor that felt almost on par with book publication, it was such a rite of passage in the world of poetry in Greater Boston.

Although the baton has passed on, the Blacksmith House series will always be associated with Gail Mazur and the area's poets will always be grateful for this legacy.

John Skoyles

I read three times at the Blacksmith House. In the early '80s with David Wojahn and much later with Stephen Dobyns and again with Michael Burkard. Each time was memorable for the warmth and enthusiasm of the crowd. A great place to read. Gail attracted and maintained a loyal following.

I was teaching at Sarah Lawrence when Gail invited me to read with Wojahn. My first book, *A Little Faith*, had just come out, around 1982. I think my Sarah Lawrence salary was something like \$10,000, and so the \$85 for the reading was big money! I was living in Providence and it rained on the Monday I had to be in Cambridge. I drove an old Chevy Malibu that would never run in the rain unless I sprayed the engine with something called Wire Dryer, and I kept several cans handy. As I was leaving for the reading, I noticed the tailpipe dragging on the road, another thing I constantly fixed. I crawled under the car and taped it up with a roll of Tiger Patch, and got on the road.

After the reading, some of us went to a bar, and I joked with Wojahn, saying, "Well, that was fun, and we got \$90 too," just for the fun of watching him dive into his sport coat for his check, to see if he had really gotten five dollars less!

Later that summer, I received a call from Gail—she said there were funds left over from the yearly budget and she was sending an extra payment to all of the readers. I couldn't believe it. I don't recall the amount, but it was help in those days. Nothing like that has ever happened since.

The Blacksmith House is probably the best place I ever read. It's informal and serious and I think it brings out the best in the poets and writers who visit—a quality fostered by Gail Mazur's charm and encouragement.

Gerald Stern

I always enjoy myself when I go to Boston especially if I'm reading for Gail Mazur, she of great cunning and wisdom.

Bruce Smith

I showed up.

I felt like a participant in the drama of the life of the arts rather than just a shopper on Mt. Auburn Street or a spectator at the BIG EVENTS that were elsewhere in the city.

Parking was the first act in the drama: the trip from Andover, after a day of teaching and coaching football at the prep school, getting a baby sitter, and entering the Cairo of traffic in Harvard Square. I'd find a place in Medford or a driveway in Arlington and if time allowed browse the bookstore that used to be on the corner of Church and Mt. Auburn (What was its name? The Coliseum? Or is that NYC?). Sometimes you'd see Tom Sleigh there leafing through Bakhtin. Peter Balakian lost his hat in a snowstorm trying to park his car. I found it the next week on my way to read at the Blacksmith, a frozen, flattened Frisbee that thawed into a jaunty suede astrakhan. Would that have happened to anyone not in sync with the passionate acts of confirmation of the participant?

Act Two: Seating. I paid the few bucks or borrowed some money and got a stub that would surface in a year as a bookmark. Scanning the room in that florescent glare to see who's there for the guild meeting before the place went black. Frank was there. And Robert. I took a spot, stage right, by the heater that would clank through the first third of the reading. Lloyd was there. Stephen Cramer. Lucie would make an entrance after the lights went out. Sue Standing. David Rivard. Fred Marchant. Students in their down and para-military attire, the seedy professorial, the untenured, the aspirants, whose body language and casual conversation and written reviews and disposable income all contributed to the endurance of the art. I knew poets or would be introduced to poets and friends by Frank Bidart. Michael Mazur was there. You could hear Tom Sleigh's laugh. Stuart Dischell was there. Marie Howe was there. Askold was there.

Act Three: Gail's Introduction. Gail would begin or try to begin, as the Center for Adult Education students would do their rumba or their curling or their square dance with the chairs upstairs. The announcement of other readings in the coming week named every other person in the room. Gail's introductions were always more of flourishing the silk handkerchief over the top hat than any ponderous accreditation. Lightness and grace (I called her Grace more than once after I met her), the introduction was done with a nimble improvisational elegance.

Act Four: the Reading. Before they were Somebody, before they were recipients of awards or institutions or laureates or professors or cottage industries of publishing or esteem, they read for us at Blacksmith. That's why we showed up, as lobbyists for the continuance of these acts of imagination.

Act Five: The Drink after the Reading. Casablanca or Charlie's Kitchen. It was an additional drama that you could take or leave depending on the time on the meter or the babysitter's fee. It was part of the participatory republic, the accumulation of small, fragile, social occasions that bound a fugitive community. I went home to read the works of art I missed with all that drama. And thanks to Gail for that place. All honor to her name.

Joshua Weiner

Embroideries out of Old Mythologies

My most memorable evening at the Blacksmith House was on the occasion of a reading in the summer of 1998 honoring Fernando Pessoa. Gail, Frank Bidart, David Rivard, Lloyd Schwartz, and I each chose a different "heteronym," as Pessoa called his various poetic alter egos. These heteronyms, or multiple personae, constitute a singular revival of Portuguese poetry for the 20th century. Pessoa is considered in his own literary movement as if William Carlos Williams, T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, and Marianne Moore were actually only one poet split into five different aesthetic and ethical personalities: Yeats' self and anti-self and anti-self and anti-self etc. If memory serves, Gail read poems from the volume, *The Keeper of Sheep*, by the Pessoaan heteronym, Alberto Caeiro. I remember the stanza that begins poem XXX from the series, which Gail read:

If they want me to be a mystic, fine. I'm a mystic.
I'm a mystic, but only of the body.
My soul is simple and it doesn't think.

There is something very Mazurian in this directness, a swing between skepticism and belief, stoicism and vulnerability; so too do Gail's lines confer with Pessoa's tough and tender inquiries, as one hears in the poem that opens her third book, *The Common*: "Was that me in the Buffalo Café/ laughing at death?"

At first, the body's baby-ish tissue,
its nervous Boston muscles,
begged to be taken home.

But that was only the body.

It was a fun evening, a kind of experiment in vocal differentiation, in which each of us put on a mask and spoke with a foreign voice paradoxically resonant with our own. We each seemed to find a thread of ourselves in the split identities of Fernando Pessoa, as if another's vestments revealed distinctions native to our own psychological and vocal habits.

Or so I thought, listening intently to Frank, David, Lloyd, and Gail discover in their voices a set of alterior tunes—as did I, plotting my own inflections through heteronym Alvaro de Campos' contradictory address, "If you want to kill yourself, how come you don't want to kill yourself?"

At the end of the reading, it seemed as if the room were somehow fuller than before, as if we were somehow all manifest in our multiplicity. It was a modest event, yet I felt buoyed by it, looking over the audience that had come to hear five poets read poems by five of the most famous poets that make-up Fernando Pessoa. That's when Robert Pinsky caught my eye, gave an exaggerated shrug, raised his expressive brows, and said, "They all sound the same to me. It's obviously only one poet."

THEY CAN'T TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME

For Gail, with love and thanks

Our romance won't end on a sorrowful note,
 Though by tomorrow you're gone;
 The song is ended, but as the songwriter wrote,
 "The melody lingers on."
 You may take yourself away from us,
 We'll miss your fond caress.
 But though you take yourself away from us,
 We'll still possess:

The way you wear your hat,
 The way you sip your tea.
 The mem'ry of all that—
 No, no! They can't take that away from me!

Those evenings at Cardell's
 The crowd at Casa-B
 One lady yawns . . . Oh, well,
 They can't take that away from me!

The way the basket passed
 (Admission once was free).
 Who knew this all would last?
 No, no! They can't take that away from me!

The way all styles you like—
 Verse that's well-formed or free.
 The way you glare at Mike—
 No, no! They can't take that away from me!

The way the poets read
 "Under the chestnut tree."
 You filled an urgent need—
 No, no! They can't take that away from me!
 No, they can't take that away from me!

We may never, never read again
 On the bumpy road to fame.
 Still wherever poets read
 They'll speak your name.

Celan, Pessoa, Bishop, O'Hara, Lowell,
 Dante, Reb Nachman ("Coltrane of Quatrians"), see—
 Great readings always were your goal—
 No, no! they can't take that away from me!

Corbett to Phillips, Bidart, Rivard, Gluck, Strand,
 Lux, Brox, McCracken, Skoyles, Kunitz, Komunyakaa, Sleigh,
 Olds, Oles, Marchant—you gave 'em all a hand—
 No, no! From us they can't take that away!

Two Ladds, two Charlies, Tess, Franz, Peg, Alice, Robin, Joyce;
 Jane Kenyon, Joe Brainard, George Starbuck, Shahid Ali,
 Levis, Wieners, Brodsky—you gave them voice.
 They can't take that away from me.

Valentines and Halloweens
 (Love and Terror with a touch of glee)
 Every Monday night you made the scene!
 Oh, no they can't take that away from me!

Cohen, McDonough, Pugh, Baumel,
 Marcy, the Jennies (Rose and Miller), Cooper—
 They helped to make the series jell—
 With you the super-duper trouper!

Hommages, Tributes, Benefits:
 Fine Arts Work Center, Roland's Zoland, AIDS Emergency,
Ploughshares, *Agni*, Hanging Loose, A. James, Bea Hawley—it's
 What they can't take away from me.

Valentine, Sylvester, Davison, Tate; M. Lockwood,
 R. Howard, B. Smith; Grace, Martha, Trudy, Jorie, Adam, Seamus!
 Cramer, Levine, Shapiro, Grossman—knock wood
 They can't take them away from us.

Harper, Barber, Painter, Weaver, Collier; Malanga, Miranda, Gander;
 Dietz & Schwartz; Dugan & Warren; Wojahn, St. John ("Hi, Liam!"),
 Boland, Hoagland, Hiestand, Voigt, Vaeth, Alexander,
 Ryan, O'Brien—they can't take us away from them.

Ai and Yau; Winter Funk; Flook Halliday; Howe Knott Pack; Share Shore
 Lease Hall; Ferry—Hull, Stern, Orr; Wright Strong;
 Hass Dunn Standing; Chiasson Rhodes West—want more?
 No, no! We can't go on like this for long.

Alexie, Barrett, Cornish, Denis, Hoffman, Searle, Treadway, Tretheway.
 (Takes our breath away.)

Benedict, Arnold, Hamilton, Haviaras, Harrison.
 (Embarrassin'!)

Kaysen, Kaiser, Cader, Menkiti, Nyhart.
 (Touched my heart.)

Payack, Doty, Dischell, De Witt, DeWoskin.
 (For the askin'!)

We may never, never read again
 On the bumpy road to fame.
 Still wherever poets are
 They'll praise your name.

Your bakelite bracelets rattle
 When you hand out the fee.
 You are the Queen of Brattle—
 They can't take that away from me!

The way you hold your knife,
 They way we all agree—
 The way you've changed our life—
 No, no! They can't take that away from me!
 No! They can't take that away from me!

Lloyd Schwartz

A CONTEMPORARY CHAPBOOK

EDITED BY GAIL MAZUR

The Beauty of Youth

Andrea Cohen

Is reinvention. My son, chameleon-like,
is someone else every day-Spiderman

in makeshift leggings, Gina Lollabrigida
in my red heels. He isn't fixed

on gender, on the living or the dead,
fictive or real, evil or saintly. I let him be

Mussolini for a day. How much harm
could he do, with little time, no reinforcements?

When he is God he learns it's lonely
at the top, and hard to recall

all his addled sisters' demands.
As Ponce de Leon, he lacks

experience, is disinterested in the fountain of youth.
One day he is his twin brother.

Even I can't tell them apart.
The next day he finds a spot

on the warm slate floor
and barely moves. Who are you?

I ask. I'm a pallbearer, he says,
missing his twin. He is practicing

for his next incarnation: a stone,
which he has learned in school

can be halved and halved and halved
without pain, in rain and heat

and still cling to its purest properties.

Rain on the sick one

Keith Althaus

Rain on the sick one,
on the one with money,
on the one who's
friends with things,
and the many with nothing.

Rain on the back of your hand
like rivers, in your palm
a lake.

It is no voyage,
there is no destination.

After heaven,
which is brief,
a long wait.

Then a sound,
a note, not
a voice, but a hole
in the mask.

A name,
spelled backwards
with a bloody finger,
on broken glass.

Classical Lines

Robin Becker

Angel Supporting St. Sebastian, 1654/55
Eustache Le Sueur

Shot with arrows and left for dead,
against the angel's leg, Sebastian sinks.
In time, he'll become the patron

saint of athletes and bookbinders.
But for now, who wouldn't want to be
delivered into the sculpted arms

of this seraph, his heavenly
shoulders and biceps?
The artist understood the swoon

of doctrine, its fundamental
musculature, and the human need
to lean against the lusty form,

accept the discourse that assigns
to each of us a winged guardian
who whispers in our ringing ears.

The Body-Object

Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna
translated by Lloyd Schwartz

The object is this body
that envelops and subjugates,
common noun
transporting allegories.

The body is this object,
necessary adjective
stranger and less our own
than the least of our dreams.

This body—object
that's neither mine, nor yours,
nor death's, nor any
other possessive pronoun's.

The earth's. It's hers. The earth
which receives us warm,
open, and willing.
The earth's and its elements.

This object is the earth's,
the earth that eats you,
body and life (are they the same?),
fruit and life (your seeds).

And finally, whatever it may be,
this peel wrapped around us:
thing, earth, or grammar
contemptuous of the metaphysical,

the body is a peroration
from father to son (or to mother)
and the soul—the soul
has nothing to do with it,

nothing but its location.

Altos de Chavon (II)

Maggie Dietz

Nothing dampened their cries,
not the air plush as velvet, not the dense
brush under the palms.

The mango trees swelled like the mother
cat's belly, which by mutation had no nipples
but had filled with milk.

The kittens tore at the bulges until she bled.
We separated them, fed the kittens bread
soaked in water we'd boiled on the stove.

One of the five would survive, and the mother
whose milk dried up like the mountain streams.
We kept her cool with damp towels.

The shopkeeper's daughter would keep them
against her father's wishes, and the name
we gave the kitten, *Chispita*, whose eyes were blue.

The guard saw everything and asked
if we wanted mangoes, angling for a tip.

What were these if not apparitions?
Slight girl carrying a pitcher, grown
man climbing a tree. The moon

looked cool but gave no relief from the heat
that climbed our limbs, the new need
nothing we knew would reach.

from Urban Renewal

Major Jackson

xvi.

What of my fourth grade teacher at Reynolds Elementary,
who weary after failed attempts to set to memory
names strange and meaningless as grains of dirt around
the mouthless, mountain caves at Bahrain Karai:
Tarik, Shanequa, Amari, Aisha, nicknamed the entire class
after French painters whether boy or girl. Behold
the beginning of sentient formless life. And so,
my best friend Darnell became Marcel, and Tee-tee
was Braque, and Stacy James was Fragonard,
and I, Eduard Charlemont. The time has come to look
at these signs from another point of view. Days passed
in inactivity before I corrected her, for Eduard was
Austrian and painted the black chief in a palace in 1878
to the question whether intelligence exists. All of Europe
swooned to Venus of Willendorf. Outside her tongue,
yet of it, in textbooks Herodotus tells us of the legend
of Sewosret (Seosteris I, II, or III), the colonizer of Greece,
founder of Athens. What's in a name? Sagas rise and
fall in the orbs of jumpropes, Hannibal grasps a Roman
monkeybar on history's rung, and the mighty heroes at recess
lay dead in woe on the imagined battlefields of Halo.

Particular Crimes

Jill McDonough

The man who burnt a city block,
the one who left a homeless vet
for dead, the one who raped a grandmother
for hours: they all turn in
their tidy work on time.

The *Boston Globe* on a stabbing:
hacking and thirty-seven times.
Sometimes I can't sleep at night, pull
the shower curtain quick to catch
whoever's hiding there off guard.

When they meet Iago, they love him:
he was justified. Justified?
I shake my head, quote the play,
write line numbers on the board.
They all hold the book
in one hand, gesture with the other
like lawyers. They know lawyers.
All in matching suits.
They understand Iago,
and they want him to suffer. They laugh,
discuss what *torments*
will ope his lips.

The coordinator approved
my proposed texts by saying
I don't think we have anyone
who committed those particular crimes.

Othello, Medea, Beloved:
Not one of my best students
smothered his pale wife with a pillow,
stabbed his small sons for revenge, slit
his baby daughter's throat to keep her
out of bondage. Not one of us
will scatter the pieces
of our brother in our wake.

Museum of Childhood

Joyce E. Peseroff

Dad didn't play the ponies
or manic games at night;

Mom was addicted
only to her soaps. Sisters

at war never swore.
Silence was genius

of an era, nothing
personal. Our hidden grief

shadowed the Fifties' sunshine
like Eisenhower's speech

against the military-industrial
complex, like playground

platoons still blowing up Japs.
Thanksgiving comes late

in this museum of childhood,
flower painted at the bottom

of a porcelain teacup:
cracked saucer, no sugar, no milk.

Ocean

Carl Phillips

Is the voyage over? This, the lull I've come to expect
after smaller victories, stunning blows of defeat? Or is this
but respite? The water has stopped its shifting, the ship
follows suit—Aboard the ship, like a hand abandoning
one gesture for another as the mind directs it, so
as the captain commands them the sailors variously
settle or, lifting themselves free from their having settled,
they rise to an attention that proves obedience can be a form
of love. He passes among them like a brightness, like
what he is: a man for whom they'd do anything, they're
a theft in readiness, magnolia forced too soon open—split
signatures, so many bruises on a freakish branch, nodding,
windless—they obey him as if divinity were but one of
several truths to be swallowed about him, and each

had swallowed. They believe what he believes, without
exception: *There's a courtesy to be found everywhere—*
worth finding, the slightest act, his removing the cross from
around his neck before fucking a stranger, a grace almost—
why not believe that, having watched him, having been
instructed to? *There's a life after death. Each comes*
back to the world transformed, not human, some lesser
animal. The captain has told them already he'll return
as a horse—and swiftly, steadily, they do imagine it:
the captain rearing, his raised hooves casting about at the air
before finding the earth again, crushing the grass each
sailor hopes desperately he'll come back as—has every
intention to—a field and powerless, the captain a horse
that the field contains now, now doesn't, may never again . . .

In Defense of Allusion

Robert Pinsky

The world is allusive. The mantis alludes to a twig
To deflect the starling, the starling is a little stare
Alluded to by Shakespeare: Jacques-Pierre,

His name alluding not to spears or beers
Or shaking, though the mantis trembles a little,
Helpless refugee. Or I imagine she does,

Feeding that fantasy to my heart, an organ
Alluded to by the expression "courage"
Like "Shakespeare" from the French, *M. Jack-Peter*.

They say his father was a secret Catholic,
The sort of thing that could get a person killed.
Religion is nearly always a terrible thing

And even allusion sometimes is full of harm—
Though it means play— as when the President promised
To defeat terrorism with a great crusade.

His writers doubtless didn't mean to allude
To the Christians, including Richard *Coeur de Lion*
And several Bishops, who made Jerusalem's gutters

Run bloody not as an image or a figure of speech.
Lion-Heart nestled in some writer's imagination,
Atemble, romantic, disguised. In every thing

A ghostly gesture toward some other. In Yeats's
"The Stare's Nest by My Window" the Catholic soldier
Trundled in his blood, the nestlings fed on grubs,

The heart grown brutal from feeding on fantasies.
The Crusaders must have killed some thousands of Jews
Among the thousands of Muslims. I used to know

A high school student who was brilliant at French.
The family she stayed with one summer were very kind
Although their allusions to dirty Jews or Arabs

Did bother her. What curdled her love for their language
Was how unconscious it was, like humming a tune.
"You couldn't wipe them out, they breed like rats."

All of the starlings in America are descended
From ones imported because a certain man
Wanted a park with every bird mentioned by Shakespeare.

The birds are a pest, they drive out native species
In the world's rivalrous web of exterminations
And propagating shadows, the net of being.

Parents & Children

David Rivard

Struck now—

tho, let's face it, we're just
adults

stuck at a child's birthday party—struck by

laughter, & grateful now

for the father

(he who records the who & what
of the birthday girl's gifts, for purpose
solely of sending thank-you notes) the father who says,

while pointing to a present being opened,

"hey, look,
it's a Victoria's Secret Barbie!"—

not true, but
sue me, it certainly sounds possible,

well within the parameters of the American market,
the memes & demographics, circa year 2000—

no, not a secret Barbie

a "Victorian Doll," porcelain
silk & feathers, rubied neckline, flat tum.

"That is not a toy,"

this clarification by Tehila
quite necessary—
what else?

a Madeleine Picnic Set
Audio tape of "The Lion, The Witch
and the Wardrobe"

("listen to this")

Magnetic Poetry For Kids, a kit

One ticket to "Arthur & Friends" the Wang Center,
shakedown for a show Broadway-bound

Mousetrap ("a really complicated game," according to Amy)
and a Secret Code Bear—

the thoughtful, caring generosity
and savage expectations, the spendthrift
sweetness of the kids here,

Amir, Sara, Simone, Nina,

Lily, William, Amy, & Olivia, here

for Simone's sixth birthday;

 "Help me," Sara will say,
 later, wanting a Band-Aid,
 holding up a finger that won't be bleeding—

"help me"
the story often enough
arrived at,

 told, or not told—

"we look almost happy out in the sun," Tranströmer says,
 "while we bleed to death from wounds we know nothing about."

And that clouded spot
on the windowpane
is the oil & sweat
left by the forehead
of someone real.

In this way
all things take on
weight.

Great Lakes

Christina Pugh

The Soul's Superior instants
Occur to Her—alone—

Emily Dickinson

Chafe your hands
over my soul's
gas ring,

and you'll glean
the warmth there,
flickering;

but my coldness
is ample:
the bounty

of any bridle.
Copse and thicket,
arbores.

Or sunrise lake trills:
startle, re-startle—
swum.

Within a wedge
of darkness,
the burrowed

life resides,
perennial
novitiate:

good morning,
Lake Superior.

Barbarian

Tom Sleigh

to a father-in-law

Tears that should have been wept over you weren't wept.
That's why, they said, during your dying, your eyes kept staring

Straight. Barbarian, was that what you thought
Of me, waiting for me to come, right before the end?

Did you envision scar tissue pricked out
In a perfect spiral all across my back?

I came to think of your eyes staring from
The eyeholes of what seemed like a helmet

The pain lowered over your face as eyes
Of bronze or of Parian marble, unmoving:

Fixing me where I stood, though I was far from you:
Fixing you all wrong: marble and bronze, for all

Their beauty, don't so much preserve, as paralyze.
Your essence aches only in the gravures of the brain.

It's bad, knowing that your memory
Must outlive us: but your daughter and I

Suffer more than the sleeplessness and restless
Self-recriminations of a father's loss:

Barbarian: how hard it is to be free
When such a word afflicts you in the doubleness

Of passing as a Roman. For you, it was easy—
For you, the rites made the imperium

Assume you were one of them: Dear Father:
Your dying eyes stared straight—*stared straight*—in vain.

Barbarian: see: my face is painted blue
Like the savage Britons who denounced us:

"Pillagers of the world, a rich enemy
Excites their cupidity, a poor one

Their naked lust for power. East and West
They devour, and still they must have more.

Rich or poor, their greed drives them to rapine,
Robbery, butchery—and this they call 'government.'

Everywhere they are is wiped out in desolation—
And this they call 'peace.'" Now, for my absence,

For what my traitor heart felt and failed to do,
For what I yearned for in your kind eyes and frail embraces,

I know my every sigh must be held against me
Forever in that place you've gone to.

That place which even now I feel my soul
Knitting itself every closer into yours.

—But for me it will be as with most men
Who have no name, no fame to call their own:

Some tears for me will be shed or not shed
Before barbarian is buried in oblivion.

Found Letter

Joshua Weiner

What makes for a happier life, Josh, comes to this:
Gifts freely given, that you never earned;
Open affection with your wife and kids;
Clear pipes in winter, in summer screens that fit;
Few days in court, with little consequence;
A quiet mind, a strong body, short hours
In the office; close friends who speak the truth;
Good food, cooked simply; a memory that's rich
Enough to build the future with; a bed
In which to love, read, dream, and re-imagine love;
A warm dry field for laying down in sleep,
And sleep to trim the long night coming;
Knowledge of who you are, the wish to be
None other; freedom to forget the time;
To know the soul exceeds where it's confined,
Yet does not seek the terms of its release,
Like a child's kite catching at the wind
That flies because the hand holds tight the line.

Keith Althaus is the author of *Rival Heavens* (Provincetown Arts Press, 1993, reissued 1999). He has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts. He teaches at the Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill.

Robin Becker is the author of five books, including *Giacometti's Dog*, *All-American Girl*, and *The Horse Fair*. She is a professor in the Writing Program at Pennsylvania State University and is on the summer faculty of the Fine Arts Work Center.

Andrea Cohen is the author of *The Cartographer's Vacation*. She lives in Charlestown, Massachusetts, is an editor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Director of The Blacksmith House Poetry Series.

Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna is one of the leading and most prolific literary figures in Brazil. Poet, critic, journalist, teacher, he is the author of more than a dozen volumes of poems, essays and chronicles. He has been president of the National Library Foundation in Brazil and a visiting writer at the University of Iowa.

Maggie Dietz is the 2002-2003 George Bennett Fellow at Phillips Exeter Academy. Her poems have appeared in *Agni*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Slate* and elsewhere. For five years, she directed the national Favorite Poem Project and is co-editor of the anthologies *Americans' Favorite Poems* and *Poems to Read*.

Major Jackson's first collection of poems is *Leaving Saturn*. He is on the faculty of the University of Vermont and was a Writing Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center, 2000-2001.

Autumn McClintock, a MFA graduate of Emerson College, works as a picture framer and lives in Cambridge.

Jill McDonough's work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Harvard Review*, *The Massachusetts Review* and *Slate*. She has been a Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center and at the Boston Athenaeum. She currently teaches writing in Boston-area universities.

Joyce Peseroff is author of three collections of poems, *The Hardness Scale*, *A Dog in the Lifeboat* and *Mortal Education*. She teaches in the English Department at the University of Massachusetts/Boston.

Carl Phillips's seventh book of poems, *The Rest of Love*, was published this year. His other collections include *Rock Harbor*, *The Tether* and *Pastoral*.

Robert Pinsky's books include *The Figured Wheel: New and Collected Poems 1966-1996*; *Jersey Rain*; *The Inferno of Dante: A New Verse Translation*; *The Sounds of Poetry*, and *Democracy, Culture and the Voice of Poetry*. He was the Poet Laureate of the United States for two terms and is the founder of the Favorite Poem Project. "In Defense of Allusion" was first published in the *London Review of Books*.

Christina Pugh's chapbook, *Gardening at Dusk*, was published by Wells College Press in 2002. Her poems have recently appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* and the anthology *Poetry 180*, edited by Billy Collins. She teaches at Northwestern University.

David Rivard's most recent book is *Bewitched Playground* [Ital.] (Graywolf). He was a Guggenheim Fellow in 2001 and teaches at Tufts University.

Lloyd Schwartz is Frederick S. Troy Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts/Boston and Classical Music Editor of the *Boston Phoenix*, for which he was awarded the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for criticism. He is a regular commentator on National Public Radio's "Fresh Air" and contributor to the website TomPaine.com. His most recent book of poems is *Cairo Traffic*. He is currently co-editing the collected works of Elizabeth Bishop for the Library of America.

Tom Sleight's fifth book of poetry, *Far Side of the Earth* [ital], is forthcoming. He teaches at Dartmouth College.

Terri Trespicio earned an MFA from Emerson College and works as a copywriter.

Joshua Weiner is author of *The World's Room*. He teaches at the University of Maryland and will be a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome 2003-2004. He is a former Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center and former Writing Coordinator there.



Janice Redman Mystery and Process

BY MARY MAXWELL

Janice Redman's work hasn't made loud claims for itself. It's been like the quietest person in the room who, when it does come time for her to say something, startles the assembly with the aptness and probity of her insights. At the American Academy of Arts and Letters Invitational this spring, Redman's sculptures appeared next to those of Richard Tuttle, Donald Moffett, and Robert Rauschenberg. This prestigious exhibition (her first in New York City) is an important one in Redman's career—and not only for the company in which she finds herself—for it marks the wider recognition of work that, especially at this historical moment, speaks with soft but timely eloquence.

Redman's vocation has proceeded with authentic deliberation. Though highly specific and personal, her art has been potent enough that viewers of it have been

engaged without necessarily having access to the specificity of its references. It seems to have woven its own set of idiosyncratic codes, not all of which are easily cracked. But with the perspective created by her most recent pieces, it's become increasingly possible to discern the shape of Redman's sculptural language and to begin to speak of and interpret her work as an "oeuvre." All along individual sculptures have suggested units of meaning, but now a kind of syntax between these can also be distinguished. Her earlier installations and made objects have acquired new resonance. New and old pieces refer back and forth to each other like grammatical elements within a sentence or like phrases within a stanza of poetry.

The composite parts of Redman's dialect can be described, but the meaning of her sculpture is resistant to interpretation. Enigma is essential to its mode of being. In this, each piece is like a demanding lyric; both are neither immediately understood nor easily paraphrased. One of her artistic intentions, preservation through memory, is also poetry's essential task. And though Redman's work is poetic, it's not the traditional poetics at work. It's not metaphorical ("hope is like a cup") nor is it symbolic ("the cup symbolizes hope"), even though the treated object may well project a quality of hopefulness. Instead her emblematic pieces are true to the complexity of thoughts and feelings. They carry the tentative sense that received modes are not fully up to the task of expression. Redman's made objects do not simply stand for something else; they function as a way of processing ideas and emotions. This is what makes the vaguely platitudinous assertion that Redman has developed her own language something more than critical rhetoric. Redman "thinks" and "feels" with and through the things she has made.

Born in Huddersfield, England to (as she herself describes them) "a family of makers," Redman grew up in the industrial North where her grandparents' generation had worked in the wool or steel mills of Yorkshire. Her mother was a trained seamstress and is a lace maker; her father is a retired electrical engineer with a hobby of antique clock repair. She considers herself part of an English craft tradition. In addition to London's museums of "high art," she recalls as particularly significant her visits to the Victoria & Albert. At the British Museum she was especially interested in medieval reliquaries, as well the museum's exhibit on Sutton Hoo. Uncovered in 1939, Sutton Hoo is a Viking-era ship filled with a sort of "hoard" for the afterlife (silver and gold cups, bowls and spoons, etc.) and buried whole like an enormous casket. Functioning something like an unrecognized cairn, but with soil rather than stones piled as a cenotaph for an Anglo-Saxon king, for centuries the boat's size created a peculiar mound in the East Anglia landscape. The identity of the king remains uncertain, just as the exact function of some the discovered grave goods are elusive. Redman's work shares a sense of inscrutableness with Sutton Hoo's archaic artifacts.

Her pieces are also decidedly "old-fashioned." Assertive exhibitions of high-tech methods or innovative materials are not part of their means of expression. Though they are (again, like lyric



JANICE REDMAN, *UNTITLED*, 2002, 4" x 5 3/4" x 1," HYDROCAL, WAX, PAPER, METAL;
FOLLOWING PAGE: *THREE IN A BED*, 2000, 6.5" X 5" X 2," METAL, COTTON, WAX

poems) individual, personal, and intentionally unspectacular, Redman's processes and materials are nevertheless highly expressive. Some of these elements include the wrapping of objects such as spoons and cups, their seams sealed and preserved with wax; the stitching, cutting away or padding of objects with bed ticking and milliner's buckram; the charring or burning away of wood objects or furnishings; the encasement of worn household objects in concrete and plaster. The labor involved in such making feels domestic, yet the exclusive attribution of "feminine reticence" to her work isn't exactly right. For while sewing and quilting are traditionally women's work, Redman's hammering, shaving and burning also imply a restrained but surprisingly forceful manliness. Instead, it is more accurate to say that Redman's methods retrieve some of the most ancient and basic techniques of all human making. Redman has spoken of the repetitive motion in the creation of her pieces as a kind of ritual act. The things she makes are fetishes, "magic" objects whose function isn't fully known or understood. "Fetish" is literally a "thing made through art" (from the Latin *factitius*) and is an etymological cousin to that other primitive and primordial "made thing," the incantatory "poem" (from the Greek *poiein*).

And although its particular technique is only one element of her larger undertaking, Redman's "wrapped objects" are nevertheless particularly significant. They are hermetic in more than one sense: They are both sealed and *mysterious*. (That word comes from the legend of the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus who is said to have made a magic seal that makes vessels airtight.) These works originated during Redman's time as a two-year fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center. She noticed that a teapot she had brought from England had cracked, and she thought to herself: "I must keep this." She rendered it unusable by sewing it up within cloth and sealing its edges with wax. It was a curiously homey impulse, this need to make a sort of permanent tea cozy. And yet that one piece transformed her context. Suddenly all the objects in her Work Center studio seemed naked, just

"bare bones." Like Provincetown's off-season boats in their prophylactic wrappings, the objects in her studio seemed to be in need of protection. Birdcages, buckets, shovels: All these were clothed, one could even say, mummified. They were treated, in effect, as once-living bodies; retroactively they were transformed into something once animate. "My Goose" (1994) got its title when Redman touched the finished work and realized the soft shape of the Work Center's wrapped wheelbarrow recalled the underbelly of a deceased pet. Yet even without such specific private references, Redman's wrapped objects suggest something curiously mortal. In the way the peculiarity of a person's clothing is a manifestation of her physical personality, the works' worn wrappings project the uniqueness of an individual soul. Like the human body, vessels are subject to breakage and decay. Like forms of preservation for the soul, such works observe the fragility of physical life and the tangible facts of death. The oversized cords of Redman's wrapped ironing board, set upright like a long-waiting sarcophagus, are poignantly crossed and re-crossed in the shape of infinity's figure eight.

On the subject of reliquaries, a very personal story is told by Redman herself: Redman's dying friend Billy asked her to put some of his ashes in a wrapped sculpture she had made from a teapot. He said, "My last wish is that you put my ashes in your wrapped teapot, because I want my ashes to be really warm and cozy." The job of transferring these ashes fell to Redman, and so she "unstuffed" the teapot and was just finishing her grim task when its handle came off and Billy's remains flew over his couch. Redman had to scrape up with her hands what she could and return them to the teapot, then stitch and seal it closed again. (Described by Michael Cunningham in *Land's End* as "creamy gray, studded with chips of yellow-gray bone," the rest of Billy's ashes were scattered by his friends upon the Provincetown dunes. With eerie coincidence, apparently unaware of Redman's mishap, Cunningham writes, "It seemed more appropriate to scatter his ashes on the ratty old sofa.") Billy's family then flew Redman to New Jer-

sey with her filled teapot for a traditional funeral and burial. But his family refused to allow the teapot at the church service, leaving it instead in a box in the car outside. The family was clearly uncomfortable about what they viewed as Billy's final resting receptacle, though Redman's wrapped piece, probably still within the cardboard box, was buried next to his father. As Redman explains the difficult period following Billy's death, "After you put your best friend in your sculpture . . . It was hard to have a lot of meaning left in my work after that. How much more meaningful can you get?"

Retrospectively, Redman's art can be analyzed thus and given an intellectual framework, but it's really not conceptual in impulse. On the contrary, Redman has spoken of how she really has no idea how any given piece and its impulse will end up. Perhaps because she works so intuitively, her sculpture has a rigorous emotional sincerity that is uncommon in contemporary art. And though it is, in this sense, non-intellectual, it nevertheless concerns itself with the activities of the mind. One ongoing subject of Redman's work concerns the mysteries of consciousness. This is related to issues of mortality; what happens to consciousness after death? But even among the living, there remain mysteries as to how consciousness substantiates itself. Some of Redman's most thoughtful work centers around such issues of physical and psychic self-awareness. In the work "Spine," for example, the spiral "spine" of a notebook is taken from and set next to that notebook, then shaped into the distinctive S-form of a human spine. Along these same lines, an installation-scaled piece consists of a chair with donut-shaped life preservers stacked upon its seat, seated like a Buddha, the empty tubal space implying the spinal cord's tunnel that carries thoughts through the body. (Redman has recognized a seated Jain figure at the Met, white stone in contemplation, as proceeding from the same sculptural impulse.) Set around Redman's attentive chair are piles of wool-encased rocks, set at its "feet" as though physical manifestations of an implied figure's cogitation. From her visual journal, on a page called "Swimming Lessons," strings attach drawn boulders to the legs of a cutout swimmer, expressing in diagram the artist's sense of being weighed down by thoughts. The journal presents a very funny series of meditations on Redman's artistic difficulties: "What do I do with all these orange life preservers I've obsessively made?" A cartoon improvisation on artistic uncertainty, pages like the one entitled "Helping Hands," presents a range of ludicrous possibilities.

Such creative worry is a form of thinking, as well as, for Redman, a process; not only a distinct movement of the mind, it can also be a way of creating. Like a dog "worrying" at a bone, thoughts gnaw at the consciousness. The word has etymological relations to wringing, twisting, a turning back and forth. This obsessive sense finds one counterpart in Redman's large twisted sausage shapes. The repeated, compulsive quality of her sewn objects also imply a movement of the sewing needle threaded through and about the seams of fabric. Those "rocks" sewn up and

sealed within wool, are they the same worrisome forms found in Redman's journal? They have a podlike character, but do they imply ovarian beginnings or mummified endings? Redman has created a series of suitcases with which to carry such pods. The padded linings are especially made for these hermetic objects; the interiors are form-fitted like an instrument case, as though to protect these eggs or organs. This context confers upon them a value of some sort in that they must be saved and transported with care, but their ontological nature remains mysterious.

Much of Redman's "worrying" into being objects such as her pods seem to derive from unstated private concerns. Some of her most recent work, in contrast, appears to contend with issues of communal worry and dread. These pieces have returned to forms and processes of her earliest large-scale installations. Though by no means polemical in intention, Redman's "room collages" were nevertheless affected by place and political context. Redman's installations, first in



Belfast (1988), and then in Lincoln Cathedral (1990) share significant elements found in "Waiting for Things to Settle (Cairn)" created in Houston (1991); all include materials with apocalyptic intimations. Using materials that have been purposefully burnt and charred (and still smelling of peat and tar) these oversized arrangements contained abandoned and mutilated furnishings. Suggesting cultural and natural disintegration, the "stuff" and "processes" of the Belfast installation in particular were drawn from Redman's immediate experience of Northern Ireland's uprisings and bomb blasts. Provincetown as a political and cultural place, of course, has had its own version of "the troubles." Yet until now it's perhaps not been obvious how pieces from Redman's Provincetown years, particularly when she moved from her room installations to objects, also carry distinctive political and social meanings. The sadness of these smaller works recalls elegiac memorial, yet on no level are these pieces lurid or emotionally manipulative. Stoically forbearing in the face of pain and loss, these meditations on

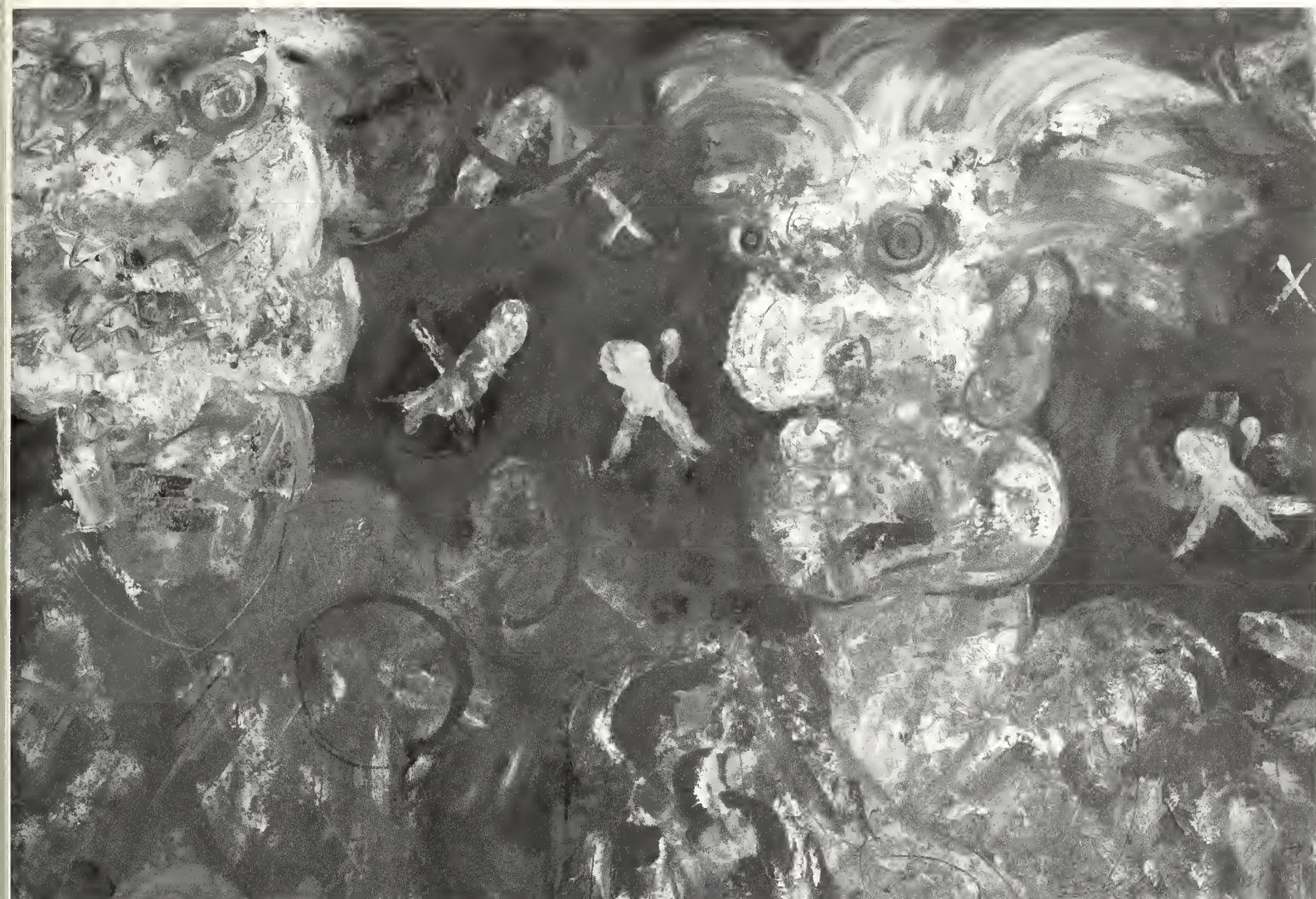
mortality do not exploit their status as laments.

Perhaps the low-pitched keen of Redman's work is culturally unfamiliar; a Yorkshire accent can be detected not only in her speech but in her sculptural language. The "quaintness" of her wrapped teapots and cutlery, as an example, is something like an American encountering Great Britain's peculiar electrical plugs. Cultural dislocation, of course, goes both ways. Redman works in Truro with the freedom and restrictions of a non-native, though just now it is not the easiest time to be a resident alien applying for citizenship. Yet Redman's perspective as a "foreigner" perhaps contributes to recent works that have collective apprehension as their impetus. Indeed, certain of Redman's older elements (her sausage-like sandbags and the until-now-inexplicable series of orange life preservers) have newly communal intensity in a time of homeland security. These works, picking up and extending older forms and anxieties, treat international concerns without stridency or self-importance.

A wall arrangement presents pages from a small book atlas of the world, all the land masses painstakingly cut away, leaving only bodies of water. It is a large piece, yet it seems small in relation to the physical mass of the viewer; one has a sense of looking at the planet from a space satellite. The work's effect is intensely touching, perhaps because the wispy, onionskin paper of which it is composed seems a particularly fragile medium. And though a page that contains only a little trickle of water that is the Thames must have singular poignancy for Redman, the piece is permeated with planetary homesickness. It suggests anxiety on Earth's behalf, though the exact source of that shared brooding remains unnamed: Is it the defilement of the oceans, air and soil by industry, by forms of bioterrorism, or by a high-tech military?

Equally powerful is another recent wall-size arrangement of photographs from a schoolchild's encyclopedia with all human figures, animals, and buildings cut away. A group of bureaucratic non-presence sits around a conference table. Others, like a waving Truman, the Pyramids, or the Queen, are humorously identifiable. But in eerie nuclear absence, all are made equal. Redman's ongoing "Ghost Series" consists of related small-scale works. A further stage of the wall piece, these can perhaps best be described by how they have been made: printed figures that have also been cut out and away from the child's encyclopedia are glued to wax blocks; their outlines are painstakingly carved away leaving the paper image on the shaped wax; this solid wax piece is then placed in a box and surrounded by hydrocal plaster; when the hydrocal block is dry, both the printed paper and two-dimensional wax image are burnt away. Set next to their corresponding ghostly photographs, all that remains framed by the plaster rectangle is a charred, gaping shape where once existed the human form.

MARY MAXWELL's poems have appeared in *Agni*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Paris Review*, *Salmagundi*, *Slate*, and *Yale Review*. She lives in Truro.



ROBERT BEAUCHAMP, *THE MEN OF CIRCLE X*, OIL ON CANVAS, 1980, 41 X 59.5 INCHES

Robert Beauchamp The Smile of Rage

BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

BORN JOHN ROBERT BEAUCHAMP, the artist never used his first name. Perhaps that was because he was named after his father, who deserted his family of seven children when his next-to-last, whom everyone called "Bob," was only three years old. This was in 1927 and soon the Depression would make the family troubles worse.

He grew up in Denver in a large apartment building he later described as a "tenement," after seeing slums in New York. His mother toiled long hours in a bakery; mainly older siblings raised him, yet his mother was the enduring rock of resilience and model for the tenacity that sustained him in hard times. Scary things happened around him. In one apartment, a woman killed her husband by putting ground glass in the sugar. In a basement apartment lived a teenager who wanted to join the circus. Beauchamp recalled that "one act was fantastic." The teenager lay on his back and swallowed the hose of a tire pump while someone else stood by his head and

pumped air into his stomach until it became "so large that it looked like it would burst." When a signal was made, the hose was pulled from the mouth and, with both hands, the boy pressed hard against his stomach. To everyone's delight and relief, air was expelled with a violent noise. Beauchamp predicted that "later, he probably had stomach trouble."

Not all his early life was urban. His grandfather had a farm 12 miles from Denver, picturesque with chickens and pigs roaming among rusty equipment. The barn was collapsing, but there was an apple orchard on the side of a mountain where the family enjoyed picnics. A cow called Dynamite kicked his grandfather, laying him up for weeks.

An older brother became an alcoholic and a younger one stricken with polio. Beauchamp, good at drawing, was recognized early and won a scholarship to Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, where he studied with its founder, Boardman Robinson. Robinson, an imposing figure with a

long white beard and thick eyebrows, had been to Russia with John Reed and his political experience generated searing illustrations, black and white and too broadly emphatic in their childlike directness to be called "cartoons." These were published in the radical *New Masses* and in New York newspapers. The emotion of the images, their "humble search for solid form," left a great impression on Beauchamp.

After three years in the Navy, serving as a gunner on merchant marine ships and daydreaming about finishing art school, Beauchamp set up shop in San Francisco filling orders for signs and other displays. Losing interest quickly he moved to Michigan to complete a B.F.A. at Cranbrook Academy. Here he found asylum in a Never-Never-Land he had not known, sanctuary in a manicured estate transformed into an ivory-tower art colony. He hated this refuge at first, then began to love the experience of shelter and protection offered to a developing artist. He decided to become a sculptor, become skilled in ceramics, and make a living as a potter. That lasted until the year he graduated. In his last year, Cranbrook was a venue for a traveling show of students of Hans Hofmann, the great Bavarian teacher of so many American artists at mid-century. Hofmann left Germany just before Hitler, that failed artist, began to denounce any art better than his own.

Beauchamp, before he met Hofmann, saw Hofmann's influence on developing artists, something "big and bold." Beauchamp felt a surge of desire and bought a Whizzer motorbike, really a bicycle with a four-horsepower motor that made the contraption travel at almost 40 miles an hour. With low horsepower, his engine yet propelled him 125 miles on a gallon of gasoline. To start the engine he flipped a lever on the handlebars to hold the exhaust valve open, then started pedaling. Once the motor turned over, he released the lever and the thing would start running. Pedaling backwards activated the rear brake; the front brake lever was on the right handlebar. There was no real transmission. Two pulleys side by side, one larger than the other, comprised the heart of the drive system. A small pulley on the engine crankshaft drove a V-belt that turned the larger part of the intermediate pulley. A second belt drove a very large pulley fastened to the spokes of the real wheel. There was no "neutral." If Beauchamp got tired of squeezing before the traffic light turned green, he had to shut the engine off and put down the rear kickstand.

On his trip to Provincetown, Beauchamp decided to visit his father, whom he had never met. He'd heard stories that his father raised hounds in a small town along a tributary of the Mississippi River in Indiana. He arrived there on his motorbike, looking for his father. He found

the town, but could not find his father. Nobody knew whom Beauchamp was looking for. After going to the post office, and learning the address of the postal carrier, he went to his house and said, "I'm Bob Beauchamp. I'm look for John Beauchamp." The postman knew whom he meant and that John Beauchamp lived down by the river bottom. He said, "I'm eating my dinner and just wait a minute and I'll take you."

Dinner finished, the postman drove his car to John Beauchamp's house, the son following on his Whizzer. The roof of the shack was layered with tattered tarpaper that had been, in places, patched with new tarpaper. Broken down trucks guarded the property and dogs were barking in several cages or pens. The postman knocked on the door.

When it opened he said, "Well, John, I want you to meet your son, Robert."

The father said to Robert, thinking he was meeting the postman's son, "I'm pleased to meet you!"

Beauchamp's poor father was in shock.

"No, John," the postman says. "He's *your* son."

With this understanding, John took his son Bob to the general store, which had seating for a few diners, and they sat around a small table irradiated with the warmth of a coal stove, eating a little supper and getting to know each other.

That night they slept in the same bed because there was only a single bed in the shack. Large

sacks of Purina Dog Chow, for the hounds, surrounded the bed. They got into bed together, creating a "strange and creepy" memory that the son remembered to forget or forgot to remember, even if it was to emerge unconsciously in the uncanny associations of his future double portraits.

Before sleep, the father said, softly, almost inaudibly, that he went crazy when he left his wife and family. That was the first and last time the artist saw his father. The next morning they shook hands and Beauchamp mounted his scooter. Between breakdowns that extended the trip to seven days, he found himself whizzing to Provincetown.

He felt as if he were transported by the strength of a stallion, more horsepower than he had ever felt beneath him. Riding the road he felt free, and then he came over the last hill of tiny Truro and saw Provincetown harbor, the bay glittering and expanding into the endless ocean beyond. He learned words to say what he felt from Hofmann who, expressing his thought in a combination of German and English, believed that art was a way to reach the spiritual through the pictorial. He lived in a large barn that he shared with other Hofmann students. Yes, Beauchamp recalled, it *was* an intense summer: "Sun, sea, dunes, parties, girls."

He forgot to mention to himself how hard he worked in his studio, and how he continued work-

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ing for three more years with Hofmann, winters in New York, summers in Provincetown. In New York, he frequented the Cedar Tavern, showed off, made contacts, and attended the boisterous talk sessions at "The Club," where hundreds of artists knew each other and people he respected—Motherwell, Kline, de Kooning—got up and gave speeches. This was the artist's forum that became the model for Long Point Gallery in Provincetown, which Beauchamp joined late in life.

In 1954 Beauchamp had his first one-man show at the Tanager Gallery in New York, an artist's cooperative that also was a model for the later Long Point. Here artists decided to take their career into their own hands, and be their own dealers. But young artists are not good at doing those two things at once, and the gallery soon folded.


Beauchamp learned to paint abstractly from Hofmann, understanding that paint was the vehicle, like a motorcycle, that took you to the place you wanted to be, an elsewhere from where one was. But abstraction, for Beauchamp, was a false illusion, failing to bring reality into final resolution. He wanted something more ordinary that simply dragged his old self forward into the present.

Like Moses Soyer and Sideo Fromboluti, Beauchamp had a studio on Bond Street on the Lower East Side off the Bowery where lots of winos made their home. Fromboluti wondered how he could paint beautiful pictures when the streets were littered with so many sad humans. Beauchamp, too, found himself disgusted one summer day so hot that the bums were passed out, shirtless, sleeping on the sidewalk. Their skin, an obscene pink, roasted while their personal juices dripped in excited rivulets between crevices of muscle, bone, and fat. Having studied with Hofmann and absorbing the ethos of Abstract Expressionism, Beauchamp's initial painting was abstract. But suddenly he found the mode unsatisfactory, too "esoteric," and he wondered what such painting had to do with the reality around him. When Neo-Expressionism made a comeback in the '80s, Beauchamp reflected with wounding irony, "The flesh of the figure has returned many times. For some of us, it never went away."

"**FOUR MEN,**" an oil on canvas painted in 1957, depicts a quartet of white-faced males with matted hair, like black skullcaps, sitting squarely on short stools, their hands folded or paired as if to grip themselves or each other. Their eyes do not regard each other and the bunched figures sit tightly in mutual isolation. Other paintings of the period show lonely trees or white nudes on dark grounds, and their hunched shapes are solitary, even ghost-like. These vague forms with soft edges were consistent with other artists associated at the time with Beauchamp at the legendary Sun Gallery in Provincetown, such as Jan Muller, Lester Johnson, and Tony Vevers. These young artists adapted the way mentors like Rothko and Avery blurred image and ground by widening edges into extended transitions that became like an aura around the image.

Beauchamp never wanted to tell a story out-

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right. In the initial phase of his mature work, he produced large canvases with multiple subjects: a giant tooth, an apple as big as the moon, witches, horses, devils dancing on thin tightropes, magic circles, hoops, lassos, round eyeballs ringed with fear. In an early painting the mythological Icarus, flying near the sun and losing his form, becomes in another painting an image of melting butter. Popular culture confronts classical subjects, without confusing the comic and the serious, but rather blending levels of understanding with the ludicrous logic of compelling dreams. Various animals appear and disappear in different scales. The size of one image is unrelated to the size of an adjacent image; each element is unrelated to the other because they do not share a common perspective. The unifying element is often merely the tint of the ground itself, with the hue acting like a kind of gelatin, holding images together as if they were odd slices of fruit suspended in a single color. As Beauchamp put down a colored shape, things came into his consciousness. If a shape developed into a bird, it did not start out as a bird, although they are recurrent emotional connections to chickens and roosters. He loved the crazy motion of chickens and the absurd way they moved. Beauchamp developed a habit of making long lists of words—bananas, orange juice, safety pin, barking dog—words that shot out of nowhere with only felt, non-verbal meaning.

THROUGHOUT THE '50s and into the '60s Beauchamp lived with the sculptor, Jackie Ferrara, and they shuttled back and forth between New York and Provincetown in a yin-yang balancing of city and seaside familiar to many artists of the period. In 1959 Beauchamp won a Fulbright Fellowship and the couple went to Florence, staying 14 months with trips to visit Rome, Paris, Munich, and London. He was invited by the Museum of Modern Art to show in its seminal exhibition in 1962, "Recent Painting USA: The Figure." His career had begun to flourish after he'd joined Richard Bellamy's Green Gallery in New York; he also exhibited at many venues around the United States. During the '60s he was invited to show in all five biennials sponsored by the Whitney, a sure sign of being on the scene. He received excellent reviews that often described him as a "painter's painter," as if to apologize for being compared to some better-known artists. In 1966 he joined the Graham Gallery in New York, won a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and spent his first winter in Provincetown. He lived on Mayflower Heights in a house with beautiful views that belonged to Walter Gutman, a wealthy stockbroker, experimental filmmaker, and patron of new and rising artists. Only one room was heated, the bedroom. "Snow gathered in corners of parts of the house and I had to dress warm to paint," Beauchamp said in an interview for the Archives of American Art. "I did-

n't pay any rent. That was an eventful year, too, because I met my present wife, Nadine."

Beauchamp and Ferrara had broken up. In Provincetown he met Nadine Valenti, an artist who also had studied with Hofmann. She too had just separated with her partner, a scientist, "someone not in the art world," she said, last December, when I went to talk with her in the Wellfleet house she and Beauchamp shared until he died in 1995. "Our courtship," she said, "was fast and funny."

I asked her why the curvy female form that often appeared in Beauchamp's canvases sometimes took on the aspect of a seductive witch.

"For a young guy," she said, "the power that a woman has over his sexual being is *scary*."

Valenti also visited Provincetown in her early years, never actually meeting her future husband until his show at the Sun Gallery in 1956. She was only a teenager in art school in the '40s when she hitchhiked to Provincetown with a class chum, Elenie Larned, a particularly "wild trip because Elenie was so beautiful, unbelievably exquisite. Every truck driver that picked us up wanted marriage."

Like youthful hitchhikers, artists often seek out situations where their conflicts will be enacted as if in a theater. Relationships commence when one picks up or is picked up by a stranger, and the ride begins. One's unconscious life is activated, mobilized. In 1984 he painted a zany portrait, "Hitchhiker," with a giant thumb and two mouths looking in opposite directions.

Valenti laughed when I asked her what Beauchamp painted around the time of his marriage. "Lassos! Cowboys! Horses! I just thought of it—he did these when we were first married." The unconscious at work, Beauchamp here revealed his feeling of getting snared, captured around the neck.

"Horses were very important to his whole art," Valenti said. "In the beginning they were always wild and passionate. They would be running, jumping, rearing up, or galloping, terrified, with witches sitting on their backs. That was not him saying, 'Now I'm going to do a painting about a witch.' The horse is in his unconscious. He wouldn't talk to anyone, or me, about what they meant. I don't think he knew until he had done them a thousand times. His thing was the struggle of the paint on the canvas itself. However, I know that horses were very wild emotional things, and I know that when he was dying the horses' heads were all drooping.

"They were sitting on the ground. They were lying on the ground with their legs splayed. So I knew the horse was dying. He did drawings, at that point, because he didn't have the strength to paint. I have a little sketchbook, the last things he did. If you look at those and you look at the horses he did when he was young, you see this was his image of the male spirit. I don't know if he said, ever, even to himself, that the horse means this. He never did that."

After they were married Valenti took Beauchamp to the Cloisters in New York to look at a unicorn tapestry she was in love with. He saw it once, then proceeded to do a series of bizarre paintings and oils on paper with the unicorn in it. In one painting a slice of a waning moon echoes the same curved horn mounted on the animal's head. The animal is alone in the dark and snowflakes are falling, dusting the sky with points of light like distant stars. There is a large painting of a young girl, doll-like, her fingers delicately painted and drawn with long hair, almost a cartoon idea of the young, gorgeous teenager. Nearby would be a threatening animal that would be half-moose, half-Bob. The unicorn intermixed up with his whole lexicon. You see a unicorn, then all of a sudden it begins to look like a penis, then the horn is broken and the animal's body looks awkward and cumbersome, like a mule rather than an elegant horse. There is something threatening about Bob's work. Ivan Karp once told him, "You know what your problem is? You paint things people don't want to think about." Valenti found it true that people really get scared. "They don't know how to look at art. They look at it as stories: this man is threatening me!"

There is no such thing as a void in a painting by Beauchamp, though he believed voids existed in human experience. In his painting, he did not want empty spaces. He believed it was more difficult to paint an object in space than it was to paint the space itself. Emptiness was disquieting. If he sought to express the opposite of fullness, he did so, for example, by the way he pursed his mouth when his photograph was taken. This was like the way he drew the mouth in his portraits. Often the mouth was only a thick line or three red horizontals with cross-hatching scribbled vertically in another color. Is not this the sign and sound of silence? The mouth, tightly sewn, effaced with the vehemence of negation, means to say, *Call me the cowboy of the New York School! I do not say! You cannot say! We are unable to say!*

Beauchamp's standard of productivity was high and individual works were equally filled with lots of motion, a ride of motion. Even in his full-face frontal portraits the curves almost always indicate direction and speed—the *panache* of the gesture. His shapes blister with the speed in which they were drawn, leaving the trace of their quickness. The gesture takes place in a forced period of time, so timing and rhythm are recorded. Emotional decisions are revealed as the figure emerges through the act of finding. This quality he especially admired in de Kooning, where the taper of the edges gives off a tremendous sense of the living hand that made the actual stroke.

Beauchamp's noses look crushed with a strange dignity, like a victorious prizefighter, after a difficult bout, who thinks, "One more victory like that and I am done for!" The ear often appears as an exaggerated double curve. (Beauchamp was as good looking as James Dean and had a marvelous smile, but he had big ears and, according to his wife, he was very conscious of them.) Hair in many portraits is rendered like

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the smear across the face in the portraits of Francis Bacon. He achieved this effect by brushing the paint, wet on wet, with an industrial broom, one of his favorite tools. His procedure, a type of automatism derived from Surrealism via Pollock, was to begin with the canvas on the floor, applying paint with abandon and rage, calling it his "Rorschach method." He kept flat knives and wide trowels at the ready for splattering and smoothing and used turpentine-saturated newspaper for blotting. At a certain point he put the canvas on his working wall and began to find the image in the mess, digging them out of available forms and finding new forms. He remembered how Hofmann stressed the need to fill the canvas with potent space, alive with activity.

"And the eyes," Valenti said, "were always like this"—and here she gestured with thumb and index finger to draw thick circles around both her eyes—round-shaped, as if startled or amazed, like *What am I doing here? How did this happen?* Even in photographs of the artist, his eyes address the camera with confrontation. His characteristic way of self-presentation is to allow his eyes to bug out a little, just enough to draw your immediate attention. Artists, I remarked to Valenti, become tough because they need to express fragile feelings.

"He was a very sweet man," Valenti said, "but he always drew a line in the sand. He knew he could not step on it and he would not let the world trespass. You could not get between him and his paintbrush. You could not get between him and his going upstairs to paint. It didn't matter if the king and queen of England arrived, he was going upstairs to paint, and I," she laughed, "was left to take care of these people, and that drove me nuts. His eyes, you are right, were always a little bit in shock, but he himself wasn't as high as that look. True, he liked to drink in the early days, but he could be very gentle, very sweet. I really respected him because he was a great person. I was happy for him to be Bob Beauchamp."

BEAUCHAMP DIED OF CANCER in 1995, as did his brother Gene, years earlier. The many portraits Beauchamp made of his brother, a homely man, strong and powerful, who became afflicted with polio when he was 35, meant more to the artist than any other work he did. His brother came to visit the artist during the summer of '78 when he was living in East Hampton, often jogging happily on the roads that Pollock drove and crashed the car that killed him. His brother Gene was in a wheelchair, having lost the use of both legs. Beauchamp painted the wheelchair with skinny wheels that appear in fierce rotation, much like his youthful motorbike may have felt while he rode across the Midwestern highways, racing to Provincetown. Beauchamp now became closer to his brother. After each had served in the Navy, they saved and bought their mother a small house, but the family had not been close, but estranged with great distance between each member. Valenti's family was Italian and even if they didn't like each other, there was always a feeling of closeness. "Bob would call up his mother," Valenti told me.

"He'd say, 'Hello, Mom, *this is Bob Beauchamp, your son.*' He would call once a year and greet her that way. Not 'Hi, Mom,' the way he spoke to my parents."

Gene had polio, but later became sick with cancer, which traveled up his spine. Just before he died the cancer spread to his brain. On medication he called his brother often, saying things like, "Bob, I'm going to leave you a legacy."

"Yeah," said Beauchamp, "what are you going to leave me?"

"Alligators," his brother said. After that Beauchamp began to put red alligators in his portraits of his brother. "Reality is at least as important a source of inspiration for Beauchamp as imagination," April Kingsley wrote in 1984. "The excruciatingly painful portraits of his dying brother Gene were painted out of real anguish and love." When his brother died, Beauchamp traveled to Florida to observe alligators in the Okefenokee Swamp.

Beauchamp had few true friends. His closest was Larry Shainberg who used to call and ask Nadine, "Why doesn't Bob call me?" The two men fished together, staring quietly at the sea, and Beauchamp told Shainberg, "A painter is in a constant state of desire. We could be called *Desire.*" Beauchamp often fished alone, getting up at four in the morning and surf casting until the sun came up. Then he came back and went right up to the studio to paint during the day and often returned to draw at night. He was very aware of his body and relaxed by using the dumbbells he kept in the studio. Beauchamp told Shainberg that he often tried to work himself into a rage when he painted and I am reminded of a poem by Alan Dugan, "On Being Unhappily in Love with Reason." Dugan suggests that rage is a fear of reasoning and he asks that rage "be cold and smile: you can." I am fascinated by that phrase, *the smile of rage*, because it adopts a voice that exists at some future point in time when a bitter and ironic wisdom is achieved.

"**YOU SAW THE ACME SHOW,**" Valenti said, referring to Beauchamp's posthumous exhibition in Boston last winter at Acme Fine Art. The painting on the cover of the catalogue, "The Men of the Circle X," painted in 1980, is filled with circles surrounding an X, like an image of finality. "To paint a head means more to me than to paint a circle," Beauchamp once said. These were the brands that the young Beauchamp saw burned into the tough hides of cattle on Western ranches, the distant memory returning full circle. Beauchamp predicted his demise and connected to his cowboy origins, where the brand on the horse identified the ranch where it belonged.

Christopher Busa is the editor of Provincetown Arts.



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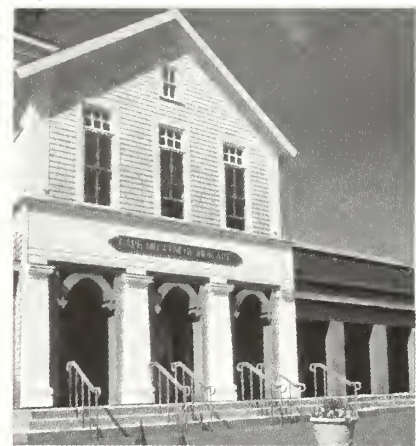
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Larry Collins

Every Shadow Is a Proof of Light

BY DAN FRAMBACH

Vietnam: 1968 is a collection of the war photographs of Larry R. Collins. Given that all the images included were taken within an active war zone they are rightly categorized as war photography, but they are largely free of the usual content of pictures within the genre. These photographs present no gore; no acts of violence are shown; no scenes of destruction are studied; no weaponry is featured. There are no flags. Even the helicopters that have become emblematic of the Vietnam era appear rarely within the collection, and they are always shown at rest—grounded, their propeller blades visible and sagging slightly. There is no attempt made to capture action in these pictures. The collection consistently resists the notion of war as high adventure. It strives instead to provoke a reexamination of the nature of war, and its effects, by presenting nearly mundane images that are made compelling by their having been caught in the heightened relief of war's extraordinary context.

Still photographs ignite the viewer's need for narrative and put to use the human mind's habit of supplying its own story line where none is provided. An intriguing image has the effect of stimulating our ability to observe, deduce, interpret, and to measure intuitive conclusions against logical tests. The process is often instantaneous and largely unconscious. It is so quick and ordinary that the information we concoct in viewing an image is often blended with the content of the piece and together these elements form the lasting impression we think of as the picture itself. In this regard, still photography has an advantage over motion pictures. By its inability to specify a story line—to show what happens next—it encourages the viewer to engage more actively. In this way still images allow a more personal bond to form between the viewer and the work. No matter how literal a representation of a particular time and place we find in a photograph, the good ones always register within our minds, at least in part, as metaphor.

Essential to the power of metaphor is a keen and correct sense of context. One method for heightening awareness of this vital element, one often at play throughout this collection, is the defeat of the viewer's expectations. Collins (as both photographer and editor of the collection) has been successful in anticipating, and in thwarting, the received presumptions of war imagery. Where the eye seeks grizzled, scarred warriors it is met here instead by a community of smooth-skinned youths. In "DJ," for example, where habit leads the viewer to search out dog tags around the neck of the bare-chested soldier who squints into the lens,

one finds only a dainty holy medal clinging to his skin. In a setting where one logically would expect to find signs of ceaseless chaos and noise one encounters image after image suggestive of calm, quiet, and peace. It is unlikely that this was the actual state of the encampment but, even if it had been, the context formed by our knowledge of the nearness of violence taints the tranquility depicted here with the sinister atmosphere that fills a jungle with sudden stillness. It is the hush of danger, more alarming in its way than the sight of a fireball or a wall of smoke. These many peaceful, contemplative scenes are charged with a harrowing immediacy by the power of context, even though, in many cases, it is only the title of the collection that sets them clearly within the battle zone. When we encounter three comrades serenely at rest within the amber glow of "Golden Afternoon," this context of imminent danger does not allow us to see them only as young men at their leisure, but also as reminders of the poignancy of impermanence.

The collection accomplishes much by conveying context so clearly. Through the exclusion of the cliché and the dismissal of the customary elements of war imagery, it frequently highlights details of time and place that allow the pictures to be seen with a freshness and immediacy that give them a wider application than standard records of war. Images are included which are almost never represented under this heading. The collection depicts tender emotions: worry, longing, regret, and fear. It does not allow them to be replaced with bravado, stoicism or blank looks of manly resolve. Nor does it dim their effect by presenting these feelings only in their extreme manifestations. There are no screaming children here, nor writhing casualties. Everyone portrayed is shown to be operating within the recognizable bounds of social inhibition.

Frequently, handsome, charming faces gaze out with expressions that mix bemusement with dread. Even in "Drunk," a compositionally complicated image that presents a small group of revelers through layers of obscuring blotches and shadow, the few faces that register fully convey both abandon and something heavier, like grief. The drinkers' field cups are upraised in the tradition of a toast to good health and long life, but their intoxicated faces are haunted with cautious reserve.

The single most unusual photograph in the collection, and the one that most clearly embodies the spirit of Collins' *Vietnam: 1968* is "Fear." It has a simple composition. It is a head-and-shoulders shot of a shirtless young man. He is leaning forward, toward the camera, into a stark overhead light. Like many others in the collection, this picture is infused with ambiguity. In several facets,



LARRY COLLINS, "FEAR"

more than one impression forms at a time, the first often giving way to a later, more accurate one. For example, it is actually a full-color image, but the starkness of the light and the high contrast it creates through casting stark shadows, cause the eye to perceive it first as black-and-white. The overhead positioning of the light source gives the scene the look of a hostile interrogation, but the subject is familiar to us from other pictures in the portfolio. When we recognize him as a member of the home company, we are struck to notice that the muting effect of the bands of shadow veiling his face, combined with the black gloss of his hair and the slightness of his features and build, have led us briefly to mistake him for a Vietnamese prisoner of war.

The presence of this image within the collection makes conspicuous the absence of such images elsewhere. It is a rare portrait, especially rare in this genre, of the unguarded expression of fear. Captured here is the moment in which fear is allowed to be itself—the moment before it is disguised as anger, or is converted into action and made to manifest itself as violence, courage, cowardice, or any of the countless other qualities of human expression that derive from fear.

It is a stark image, still in every sense. The mortal nature of this fear is highlighted by the perhaps accidental way in which the subject's face is rendered here. The bones underlying the flesh assert their structure in this lighting. The rounded tip of his nose, with nearly no shadow to shape it, is made to look like the empty triangular opening in the face of a skeleton. The visual misimpression that forms presents the skull foremost to the eye. It is an eloquent depiction of the susceptibility of the flesh to death and of our capacity, perhaps unique among the animals, to appreciate, contemplate, and to fear its inevitable arrival.

As observers, the image of this deeply frightened face fills us with concern. As we do in life, here too we become aware of another's fear by deducing it from his expression. Unlike life however, in this encounter we are the only ones present. Whatever this soldier's fate, he is no longer there, in that pose, having that particular experience. The fear we feel is our own. We know the look on his face could as easily visit ours, if not in a war zone then in a doctor's office, on an airplane, or as we watch the evening news. It is this fear, the fainter resonance of his great fear, that allows us to understand the image and to experience the secondary emotion, that of our concern for the subject. It is as if the image has the power, in this way, to call upon or to awaken our innate compassion.

The evocative power of these photographs is great. At its heart is a combination of ambiguity and surprise that coaxes us out of the habitual mode of seeing. We are led away from a simple reading of familiar material and are encouraged to

develop a heightened awareness of our engrained processes of observation, interpretation, and reaction. It is this adjustment within ourselves that appears to bring these images to life, and to endow them with meaning, for the adjustment is the same one we often make when confronted by the confusing and the alarming in life itself. Given how strong the effect of these images is upon us, it is perhaps surprising to realize that the statement formed by them as a group resists summary.

It does not appear to be Collins' mission to express or support a political or ethical position on the existence of war. There is no overt statement either promoting or condemning war. None is needed. History demonstrates that war requires little promotion in order to exist and, if war is to be condemned, ultimately, war alone condemns war best. Rather, he seems to have set out to gather visible evidence of the invisible nature of life in the world. By presenting samples of life within the context of war, which is to say within the context of death, he succeeds in conveying that the nature of life is distinct but inseparable from death. It is luminous and dark, persistent and fleeting. Life and death cannot exist independently, one without the other. Similarly, violence and peace both exist here, equal in their potentials, each knowable only in contrast to its opposite. It is their sheer interchangeability that forms a moral choice. It is a choice that, like the interpretation of images, calls upon the acuity and discernment of the viewer to be executed correctly. Within the awareness of this interplay of opposites, every act of violence, whether immediate, remembered, or anticipated, contributes to the context of violence. A context has meaning, though, only when viewed from some point outside itself. It is our knowledge of peace that allows us to recognize violence. It is our awareness of death that allows us to know we are alive. Within the human mind, then, every hint of death is a proof of life, every failure of peace is proof of peace itself and, just as it is in the realm of sight, every shadow is a proof of light.

DAN FRAMBACH lives in New York City where he is working on a collection of stories tentatively called *The Kali Yuga*.



it always i wished it would have an erotic flying dream, but instead it dreamt that it flew into a bakery and examined all of the pastries.

FLYING DREAM (The Bakery) © TABITHA VEVERS

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Martha Dunigan in Retrospect An Homage

BY DOUGLAS BOHR

*White bone found
on the grazing:
the rough, porous
language of touch*

—SEAMUS HEANEY

A retrospective exhibition is an opportunity to reflect, reconsider, and remember. It is a rare occasion to have a selection of some of the more significant and seminal works of an artist's career assembled together. For some it is an opportunity to become better acquainted with a life's work. For others, it is simply an opportunity to remember a life lived through art. On the occasion of the upcoming retrospective survey of Martha Dunigan's prolific career, we are given the unique opportunity to see a large selection of her body of work, dating from earliest to latest. A selection of such breadth may never be possible logistically to assemble again.

The works show Dunigan's passage through various chapters of her life and career. Some mark a turning point. Some carry with them the seeds of an idea that germinates or culminates in later works. Common threads connect distinct works throughout the decades. She worked with skill in a range of media; her versatility was the very way she remained steadfast as her work deepened and matured. She negotiated a delicate balance between form and content, between thought and expression, and prudently exercised her understanding and mastery of the visual language in order to convey meaning above all else.

She was raised in a family of painters, sculptors, writers, and musicians. She grew up in a family of artists, she once said, "where to make and do was to be." The daughter of painter Philip Malicoat, Martha was raised to see art as an extension of herself and a vehicle to establish her place in the world. Born in 1934 in Provincetown, amid economic hardship, Martha was drawn close to her immediate surroundings on Cape Cod to nourish and shelter her. For any of us, her vision of the world would become the setting and the point for her personal work, the subject of her art, in



MARTHA DUNIGAN, *SMALL COVE*, 1992, WOOD, CARDBOARD, FABRIC, TAR, STRING, CONCRETE, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

some shape or form, for the rest of her life. The details of her childhood surroundings would become the vocabulary, the language, and the constant reference for the telling of the story.

Many of the forms and motifs that emerge are a direct response to Cape Cod or Maine, the sites she returned to again and again throughout her lifetime. Intuitive and personal, her forms are equally archetypal: boat, house, pod, stones. In every endeavor she unearths objects that we are able to enter as a personal journey. The personal mingles with the universal.

Upon closer inspection, we recognize images of isolation and gathering, concealment and revelation, connection and division, transience and immobility, beginning and end, and perhaps the cycle of all things. Consider the impenetrable lead-

en structure of *Dusk House* or any of the tar-bound house-like structures, where we sense concealment. These bodily forms are singular, stoic structures that appear almost confrontational, warding off trespassers. Without question, there is a clearly established boundary of interior and exterior. Others like *Island House* which appear to have tightly concealed their interior under the same tar and wax, have opened and now reveal their contents—the tightly wrapped secrets, the personal correspondence of the artist. A work aptly titled *Guardian*, like that of *Parable*, rests firmly on its pedestal, the house form wrapped, painted in thick black tar, entrenched and unwelcoming. *Small Cove*, however, appears as a gathering of these same private individuals, reluctant, but communal nonetheless, like the homes of coastal Maine in

winter, like the people of a rural New England community. Others, like *Double Pod* and *Pleiades* take a more organic form, but the theme is nonetheless the same. Based on the Greek myth of Atlas's seven daughters turned into a cluster of stars, *Pleiades* suggests the concealment of the human form in an otherworldly, organic form, whereas *Double Pod*, like *Island House*, has opened. Its contents of the same bound letters spill from its shell, as if seeds of ideas, or seeds of memory. This sense of concealment and revelation is addressed in a more aggressive manner in *Mitose*. The cellular form of *Mitose*, as the title suggests, is forcibly split down the middle by a steel wedge, divided at its poles to become two distinct, autonomous structures—divorced. In contradiction, or perhaps simply in relation to *Mitose*, stands *Conduc-*



MARTHA DUNIGAN, *MITOSE*, 1994, WOOD, WIRE, MESH, PAPIER MACHÉ, RED DIRT, LEAD, TACKS, WELDED STEEL, 29" X 44" X 41"

tor, a rigid, self-contained structure with one major difference: a lightning rod reaches from its roof top into the air as if trying to make contact.

These images of concealment and revelation appeared on the artist's earliest woodcut prints in which she directly referred to literary sources as the conceit for her subject. In comparison to the latter sculptures such as *Double Pod* or *Pleiades*, the editions of *Pomegranate* or *Pear* prints, as simple as they may seem in comparison, foreshadowed the latter works. In these prints, the organic forms are split open. We see a cross-section view, not merely a rendering of the surface. Perhaps intuitively, Dunigan was aware of interior and exterior, of containment, of deliberately choosing to reveal what was hidden beneath. It is all the more obvious and powerful in works such as *Jonah and the Whale* or *Peter and the Wolf*, where she cleverly reveals the interior, the gut, the cavity, and the inner being, not mattering how illustrative. And most marvelous is her complete suite of prints illustrating the *Canterbury Tales*, where the underlying theme is the allegorical journey of Everyman.

Of course there are the boats, the vessels, the vehicles of transcendence. The contradictions, the complexities of human nature, the ebb and the flow of a human life are as subtly and masterfully conveyed in these as in any of her works. There are the boats that have capsized. Others seem stranded, or raised upon wood pilings. There are the boats that clearly impart a sense of metaphorical journey, such as *Skin Boat* and *Dark Tide from Redhead*, that take on a bodily form. Like the whale or the wolf of the aforementioned prints, they carry inside them something of deeper significance, something of meaning. Sometimes filled with bones, sometimes filled with the wrapped letters, these boats may be thought of as surrogates for the body, the earthly vessels of soul and spirit.

From the first days of arriving in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, my wife, Julianna, and I remember looking out our window to see Martha hard at work early in the morning or late at night, when all else was quiet on the city street. That was our first image of an artist in our new home, and as far as we could see and as far as we were concerned, she set the standard for her peers and the whole of the artistic community of the region. Martha was the most ambitious, tenacious artist we had met upon our arrival and that impression never changed as we came to know her. She was a dedicated artist, teacher, and advocate for the arts and the community in which she lived, be it in North Carolina, Maine, or Massachusetts. The artist and her art are inextricably linked. In her absence her work is our link to a life of dedication and devotion.

DOUGLAS BOHR is an artist and Director of Public Programs and Exhibitions at the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As Associate Curator, he, along with Breon Dunigan, Martha's daughter, and Bob Bailey, her husband, organized the retrospective exhibition, Passage, for the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina in May, 2002.

Greg Mumford

BY MARGARET BERGMAN



GREG MUMFORD WITH ROSIE O'DONNELL

There is a youthful exuberance that springs from Gregory Mumford's work. The 26-year-old Boston-based painter lives and paints in his studio above The Piano Craft Guild, where paint-splattered drop clothes are tossed around the floor like canvas throw rugs. Mumford is a messy action painter who prefers to squeeze paint directly from recycled plastic mustard containers, without bothering with a brush. Mumford winces at the name his mother and art dealer, Mary Mumford, has titled his new body of work: "Bubble Gum." However unlike the light beat of Bubble Gum music, Mumford's work is steeped in wit and whimsy. Painting in acrylic and oils, his built-up surface is more three-dimensional relief than flat painting. The coiled effect of the paint coaxed out of the mustard bottle makes a labyrinth of rippling silly string, evocative of the raw energy and spontaneous danger of lion cubs at play. Mumford raises the question: at what point in time will the playfulness flash over into deadly anger?

Greg Mumford grew up in a household of painters. Mary Mumford studied with Hans Hofmann and his father, James Gregory Mumford, was a painter with gestural leanings toward abstract expressionism. Greg Mumford grew up with original Audubon paintings and works from the Hudson River School of Art, but he was most influenced by the Hofmann sketch of Provincetown that hung in his family's living room.

The artist frames his work with brightly colored buttons of acrylic which resemble swirls of costume jewelry, primitive sea life, or suns. There is an unrestrained, yet measured quality in the range and mood of Mumford's work. Rosie O'Donnell, the television personality and magazine publisher, visiting Provincetown last October, purchased a Mumford, titled "September 12." Before she knew the title she realized that her own impulse to paint began on September 11. It reminded O'Donnell of her own painting, and this summer the gallery will show the two artists in tandem.

MARGARET BERGMAN interviewed the artist-couple Nicoletta Poli and R.D. Knudsen elsewhere in this issue.

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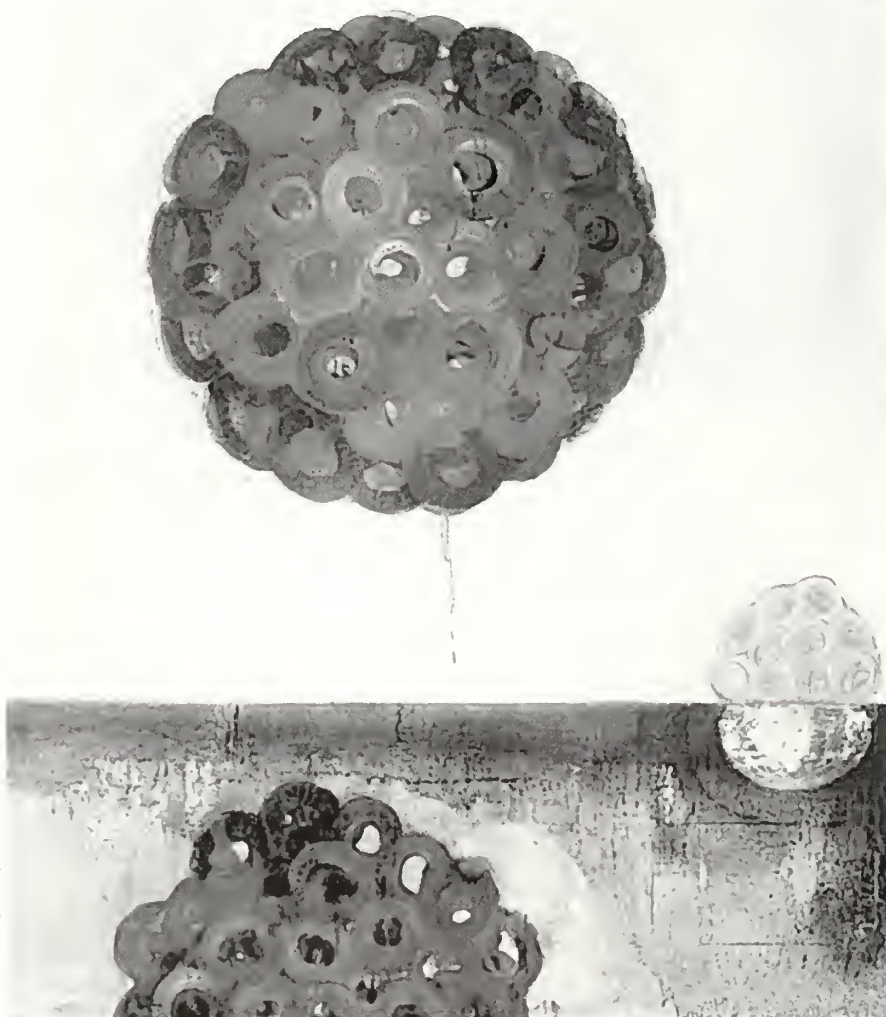
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SARAH LUTZ, RIPE, 1932 OIL ON CANVAS, 40" X 36"



Sarah Lutz Morula*

BY ELIZABETH FODASKI

From a unit of being to a unit
having been, transmuted,
dropping off, shedding itself
regularly and with
abandon.
Droplets,
clotted clusters,
woman made life forms
whose influence
carries over ceaselessly into
perpetual daybreak, landscapes,
burgeoning blues and greens,
concurrently, these pinkified
floating clusters rising
as if launched,
spawned, and pushing
to the edges of their skin.
Perpetual chain,
perpetual findings,

a series negotiation,
as in birth or
birth. Perpetual surroundings,
perpetual register of
perpetual
comings after.
Unstatic eventuality
in perpetually
becoming.

**A morula, the object depicted in these paintings, is the scientific term for a mass of dividing cells at an early stage of embryonic development. Lutz inserts a horizontal division, like a horizon line, animating the future life of the embryo.*

ELIZABETH FODASKI is the author of *fracus* (Krupskaya, 1999). She lives and teaches in NYC.

Ernie Bynum The Wharf Series

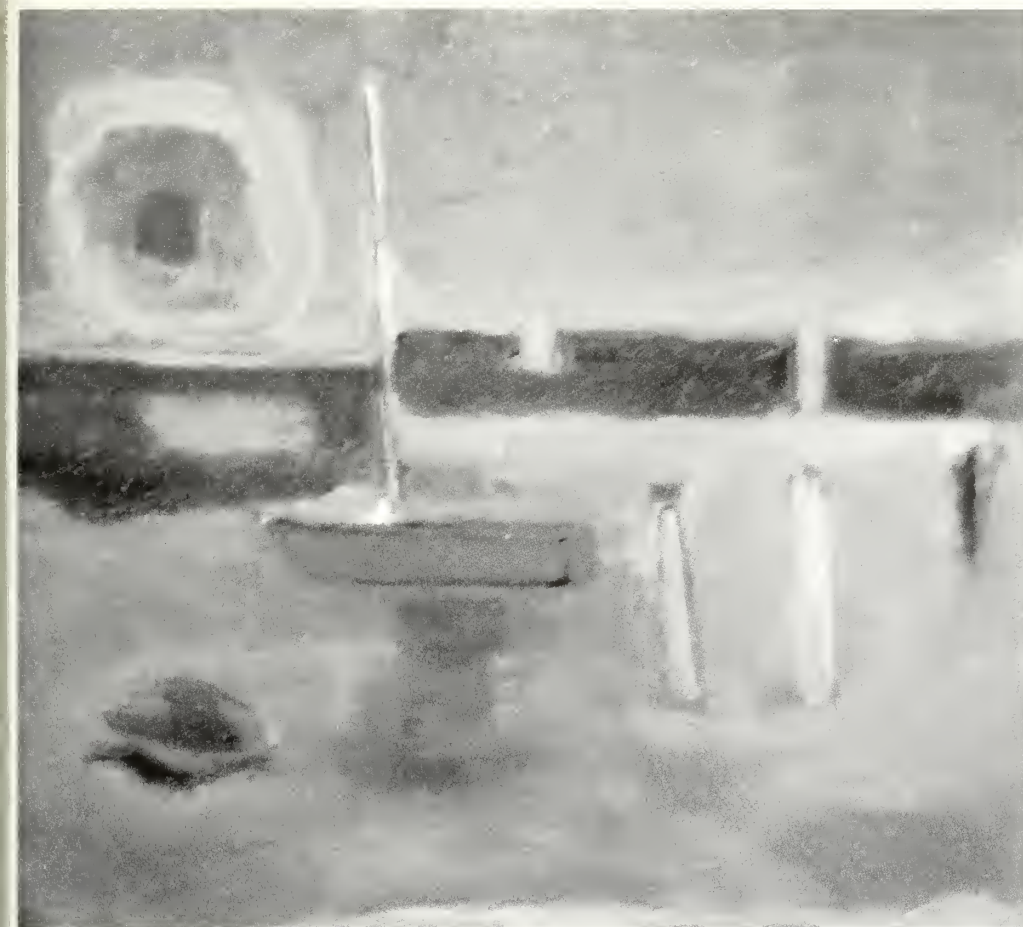
BY DENNIS COSTIN

When he is not painting, Ernie Bynum enjoys spending time with his five-year-old daughter, Elena Charliene, whom he named after his mother. Something of deep love from past time is present in the experience of his paintings of wharves, with their wooden pilings pounded firmly into foundations of sand and water. Warmth and emotion emanate from the bright colors that bathe wharves witnessed from a distance, not only in Provincetown, but in coastal Connecticut where he grew up, and in New York City along the East and Hudson Rivers. During a recent visit to West Africa, Bynum observed the old wharves and pylons in Mali. He realized that each wharf from a different culture displayed a commonality of function. Pilings or pylons, stiff uprights, provided support for the level of wooden planks that floated a few feet above the water. The function of these wharves was to generate income. The sea was the hunting ground and the prize was the fish brought into the dock.

For me, a person who wrote a senior thesis at NYU on Brancusi, I cannot help but feel kinship between Bynum's soaring pilings, smoking with the colors of radiant heat rising skyward, and Brancusi's thin, slender piece of steel reaching for infinity, called "Endless Column," rising 90 feet from its base. Bynum's thin figurations of these pilings, via deliberate strokes of his brush or attenuated gestures with his palette knife, gives a feeling of upward and outward movement.

The intensity of Bynum's color builds with each layer. Shadowed figuration, which could double as either a piling or a single mast of a dory, makes the mystery present. The dory could be moving while the wharf must stay put. Bynum makes multiples out of repeated rhythms and this impulse is evident in paintings of harbor boats, the land mass behind them, and the almost protective spirit of the setting sun. He manages color in restricted ways so that one painting can differ markedly without being divergent in its essential range. Here the issue of his multiple figurations comes alive. Only many pilings support a wharf and a harbor of sailboats possesses many masts. The verticals and horizontals move across each other in the course of an afternoon, leaving a glow or shimmer as evidence of a fading existence. Taut shapes move with self-contained energy in a slow cadence across the canvas in an evolutionary process of moving to a painting devoid of figuration. Each step, punctuated by strong verticals, is a saturated color liberated from reality. The horizon line is the level ground that anchors Bynum's canvas to the stage it represents.

In some newer pieces from this series, figura-



ERNIE BYNAM, FROM *WHARF SERIES*, OIL ON CANVAS

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tion is becoming less obvious. In earlier work the horizon line is often clear between land, water, and sky. Now the sharp demarcation is lost in reflections. Colors seem bent as if passing through the refraction of water. Here the morning sunrise and full moon reflecting off water become powerful characters in the landscape.

It's equally interesting to look at Bynum's *Cottage Series* because there is a clear connection between his *Wharf Series* and this series. Like the *Wharf Series* it's his sense of color that set off the paintings of the cottages. Bynum's palette holds the secret to his use of brilliant and explosive colors. He formulates his ideas from his subconscious mind and lets his palette knife and brush create the images. The symbol of the cottages leaves the viewer wondering, "Is the reflection off water or land? Has he created images that, once again, float across the canvas? Are the cottages moving from middle-ground to the background and eventually will they disappear as recognizable structures?"

In the *Cottage Series* now in progress, Bynum sometimes clearly delineates the background from the middle and foreground by indicating water either with or without a dory shown just below the horizon line or in the middle ground. In other pieces the viewer may see only the mast of a dory or a portion of one but the imagery enables one to move beyond the cottages into infinity. Like his *Wharf Series*, the *Cottage Series* exhibits that ubiquitous image of the sun/moon rising above and shining down upon

the cottages. In this series we see figuration but, as in the *Wharf Series*, Bynum is moving away from recognizable shapes and using color to tell his story.

Having studied at the Art Students League in New York, Bynum discovered that his voice as a painter lay in the modulation of his colors. Color would speak for him. His work is simple in form and dynamic in presentation. He now works up to 10 hours a day in a studio located near Union Square in Lower Manhattan. His palette, he says, "is indicative of where I have lived and visited. These places have influenced my sense of color and I work to give synergy to the colors I end up using." These colors are a mix of cadmium yellow, red umber, radiant orange, cold cobalt blue, periwinkle, and a great range of light-struck sap greens.

His process is to work for weeks until he reaches a level of confidence that drives him to push forward, reducing form to its essential felt colors that invite the viewer to enter the atmosphere. His studio is flooded with light from six large windows covered with parachute fabric and from rows of even lighting hanging from the ceiling. Paintings in progress stand on several easels in various states of completion, waiting patiently for the painter to finish.

DENNIS COSTIN is Director of the Ernden Gallery in Provincetown. He graduated from NYU with a degree in Art History and has been an art collector for the past 25 years.

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Rose Basile

The Gospel According to the Daughter

BY MARGARET BERGMAN

In her decade-long *Fishermen Series* (1993-2003), Basile documents a dying fishing industry that once comprised a way of life along coastal New England. Some of the 25 paintings suggest a romantic, almost sappy sentimentality for the fishermen, but Basile's strongest work is found when she casts a cold eye and draws on religious themes found in Christianity.

In *Oh My God, We Caught the Last Cod*, Basile means to pay tribute to her beloved fishermen. The title for the painting came to her as a poem in a dream. Depicted on Fishermen's Wharf, with Robert Cabral's fish shed in the background (the country's main processing plant for overseas Tuna shipments to Japan), the fishermen are painted as faceless, hooded executioners. The sky, ocean, and wharf are all painted blue. Red streaks along the pier render the blood of slaughtered fish. While one fisherman is jumping for joy with outstretched jazz hands, a yellow cod lies unceremoniously in a light gray coffin. Another fisherman is genuflecting near the cod's corpse. The colors of this fisherman's gear are the same as the cod, underscoring the empathy between the fish and the fisherman—their fortunes, good and bad, forever intertwined. It is not so much a painting about the plight of the Cod, but the plight of the fishermen who over-fished under-stocked areas such as the George's Bank: some fishermen are repentant, others have no clue.

Basile's paintings may look simple, but the color and composition is painstakingly planned and executed in a series of sketches and magic marker studies before finally being painted in acrylic. Basile has a fisherman's or athlete's approach to her work: study, work, study, work, study, work.

In *Fishermen Mourning*, 2000, six fishermen stand at the edge of the pier, their heads bent and their hands held in prayer, while six fish lie on the pier, and fish-shaped clouds float in animated suspension, mirroring the scene on the blue painted pier. An effigy of the crucified Christ is nailed to the wooden mast of the fishing vessel at the pier. The figure is naked except for a loincloth and is wearing a crown of thorns. Christ may have been a carpenter, but the apostles were fishermen who followed Christ as "fishers of men." The fish-shaped clouds haunt us with thoughts of an afterlife, and the fish on the pier are evocative of the "loaves and the fishes." Feeding the fish is what fishermen do and the painting has two disparate themes: fishermen are being regulated by government regulations which allow



ROSE BASILE, *OH MY GOD, WE CAUGHT THE LAST COD*, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

30 fishing days a year or fishermen are being executed for over-fishing and not allowing stocks to rejuvenate. Whatever the cause, fishermen are mourning a way of life that no longer exists.

In *Fishing the Hell Hole*, Basile uses white, blue, green, and red to paint a flat scene of two fishing boats tipping on the edge of a precipice which leads directly to hell. The boat closest to the cliff of water is white with blood-red trim and the fishing lines and hooks flung in arcs off the transom look like pitchforks flung into the sea by a cartoon red devil with an erection, sitting on the stern. The other boat is painted the same green as the sea and there is a hint of a crucifix atop the mast of the motorized boat. Fishing is often described as being the most dangerous occupation (Sebastian Junger's *Perfect Storm* made clear why the Grand Banks is known as the *Hell Hole*).

There is a Catholic hymn in Portuguese called "Pescador de Hombres." The song is about the relationship between God and fishermen. One of the verses roughly translated: "In my boat you find no power, no wealth. Will you accept then, my nets and labor? All I longed for, I have found by the water." Basile's exhibition will travel the coastal towns of New England and end at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in 2004. Basile captures the spiritual relationship between God and fisherman.

MARGARET BERGMAN is publisher of Provincetown Arts.

Two Paintings Two Histories

BY WILL WALKER

Fifty years ago the freighter *Eugenia*, out of Panama, ran aground on the Peaked Hill Bars. I remember it well, since it seemed that most of the town of Provincetown made the trek across the dunes to view the stranded ship. It was easier in those days to get to the dunes, since no permits of any kind were required, and many people, including my father, had vehicles equipped with four-wheel drive for the trip.

Phil Malicoat set up an easel and painted a picture, "Eugenia." While he was working my father took a photograph of him, with someone whom I think is Harry Engle sitting on a large driftwood spar in the foreground with his back to the camera, watching Phil at work.

My parents bought Phil's painting, and eventually it ended up hanging over the mantle in my family's summerhouse in Provincetown. A copy of my father's photograph, less well cared for, ended up stuck between the covers of a book in the bookcase.

About 10 years after Phil painted the *Eugenia*, Harry Engel painted a canvas he called "Caesar," a large pug-like image of Caesar's head looking bloated by imperial power, arbitrary, capricious, and dangerous. It's a dark and nearly abstract image, but not without strength. My parents also bought it, and it is hung upstairs from "Eugenia."

What these two images have in common is that they both fell prey to the ravages of several decades of hanging in an unheated summerhouse permeated with the dampness of Provincetown harbor. Over the years the canvas of the "Eugenia" began to flake along the line of the beach in the foreground, sections of sinuous wave started to lift off the backing, the superstructure of the ship itself grew mold on its surface, and the clouds in the sky started peeling. The effect was a little like seeing an elegant uncle, a man who in his youth was meticulously turned out, slowly lose his grip and become more and more frayed around the edges as his eyesight and energy flagged. It was a painful sight.

"Caesar" was faring no better. He hung in a more protected spot, up the stairs to the second floor, but over time he developed sections where the paint popped up in little pointed eruptions, revealing the white gesso beneath the surface. Caesar's cheek deteriorated in what appeared to be a very angry rash, followed by his neck and forehead. The effect, though, was different from the deterioration of "Eugenia." Somehow Caesar's unraveling seemed in keeping with the theme



sar" had been painted on poor quality canvas, the gesso was separating from itself, which is difficult to remedy, and it seemed likely that some lead-based paint had been used. The quality of the paintings was a factor as well. The image of the ship, to me, has nobility to it, dependent on the slight list given to the hull, the only clear indication that the ship is aground. It's imbued with the surreal sense of accident, when things end up in places you don't expect, and it has a stillness that suggests the isolation and vulnerability of the ship. It's an old rusty hull that has been trapped, almost like a bug on a specimen tray. Around it the sea and sky and beach express a careless perfection in contrast to the decaying hull.

"Caesar," by contrast, is harder to love. He's barely visible at close range, hard to distinguish from the roiling strokes of the paint. While he seems meant to be crude and offensive, it's hard to separate the crudeness suggested in the subject from the crudeness of the work. Still, I think perhaps alone among my siblings, I find the painting compelling and would have preferred to take care of it.

Both embody a last intangible consideration: preservation of memory. "Eugenia" has obvious associations, further embroidered with my own memory of visiting the site at the age of four and suffering my first heavy casualty count of toy soldiers. A whole battalion of figures disappeared in the dunes that same afternoon while Phil Malicoat was working on his painting. The painting of the "Eugenia" is wrapped up with many memories of Phil Malicoat, my father, and my own participation.

"Caesar," by contrast, is only tied to my memories of Harry Engel, whom I met a few times at my uncle Hudson's house. And mainly what I remember about Harry is that he always seemed to be chewing on a half-smoked cigar. Surprisingly, I find this a pleasant memory, and to some extent I can tie the feeling of it to the image of "Caesar" in all his disrepair, but the connections are less strong.

Now the two paintings hang in their respective places, headed in different directions. "Eugenia" looks vibrant and solid, now an image testifying to the possibilities of slowing down the process of deterioration. While it's not like new, it's more like



it than it used to be. In its present state it's likely to outlast me, which is part of the point of the restoration. "Caesar," on the other hand, has become an unusual variety of a performance piece, embodying the decay it depicts. One suggests that, with vigilance, it's possible to preserve the things you love; the other, that all things must pass. I hope it's possible to embrace both these truths.

WILL WALKER has been a summer resident of Provincetown since early childhood. He now lives in San Francisco with his wife Valerie and two dogs. He has published poetry and essays in Haight Ashbury Literary Journal, Bark Magazine, San Francisco Chronicle and WKED radio.

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Tom Lindsay's Paintings: Something to Look at

BY HEIDI JON SCHMIDT

Tom Lindsay sometimes seems to think in poetry. Lines from Yeats and Eliot and Stevens stream through his mind and into his conversation, as naturally as if language was made not of words but of great lines. He came to Provincetown as a Fine Arts Work Center Fellow—in poetry—in 1970. He and his partner John Street lived between Provincetown and Cambridge for 40 years before moving to Florida in 1993, and Tom was part of a triumvirate of writers—Keith Althaus and Roger Skillings were the others—who put down roots here and lived to talk about poetry, politics, and art.

So Tom's painting, when I first saw it in the late '90s, came as a complete surprise—the gorgeous subtlety of his colors and his amazing precision. I'll never forget standing under the eaves in his tiny room as he showed me the new paintings, marveling at this immense new capacity I'd discovered in my old friend.

It was my surprise, though, not Tom's. In fact, his favorite book as a child was *Favorite Paintings for Young People*, and as soon as he was old enough he would haunt the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, his hometown. He began "playing with paint," untaught, and subscribing, as he says, (smiling) to "the romantic anarchistic ideas of hippydom—that we are all innate artists who have only to unbind inhibitions, etc." Inhibitions wonderfully unbound, he found himself in Malaga in 1962, selling his drawings on the street to earn the "daily bread and dope," which helped unbind his inhibitions further and led to his first organized study of art—in the Occupational Therapy department of the hospital in which he was now interned. In this "wonderland of art equipment," he experimented with every medium, including "breath painting"—blowing paint spatters around on paper to create a painting, later an Andy Warhol technique.

The '60s were drawing to a close, and all across the land left brains were getting restless, ready to rise up and seize the reins, rope in those errant painters and guide their rampant polymorphous perversity highstepping along a new, more civilized, path. Beginning his Fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center, Tom looked around at the "real" painters and found himself intimidated by their abilities and accomplishment. As he says, there was no lack of visual delight and he was happy simply to look at Provincetown's great profusion of art. He quotes Barnett Newman saying: "Painters paint so they'll have something to look at." And Provincetown, as we all



TOM LINDSAY, PERUGIAN SQUARE, WATERCOLOR

know, is made of things to look at, even just the odd angles between the houses as one casts down an alley for a glimpse at the bay, or the jumble of paintings in every collector's living room (and as much as we live in a town of painters, it's a town of collectors too). A town of people looking, at scenes, at paintings of scenes, at each other, at paintings of each other—many of us have come, simply, to look.

When Tom moved Florida in 1993, he found himself bereft of Provincetown's wealth of angles and glimpses, and paintings, and faces—and took up his brush, so as to have something to look at. He was shaky at first, but the years of close attention to the world made for a fierce ability to see, and his technique leapt to the challenge. His watercolors have the bright clarity of stained glass and the same inspiring effect. A Perugian square is seen from the depth of an archway, so it seems even more brilliantly stricken by the sunlight that cuts shadows across its shuttered housefronts. It's a literary choice of viewpoint: there's no one in the painting but a human presence is palpable. The characters must be resting in stuccoes cool after a perfect lunch, and as soon as the shadows lengthen the men will return to their discussion of the mushroom harvest and the women will hang the bedding out to air.

A tomato is bulbous as a baby's cheeks, subtly shaded red, yellow, green; beside it two courtly chilies bow to each other and a bunch of leeks undulate softly, their roots flowing. Provincetown's harbor is a busy jumble, the opposite of the clean lined Perugian square, curving back around that day's fascinating tidal shape (a cold



TOM LINDSAY, PROVINCETOWN HARBOR, WATERCOLOR

day, you can see in the blue of the water; you have to cast back to the blue of the Perugian sky for warmth). And in the foreground of this tourist's delight: the stark black prow of a fishing boat, all function, the emblem of the hard life and easy death that built the gorgeous place behind it.

My exhilaration at these paintings has several sources. First, it's always exciting to see a friend really bloom, but to see a friend bloom madly in late life is wonderfully inspiring and reminds me of the potentiality in all of us throughout our lives. Second, to see a poet blaze into color is to realize the interconnection of all the arts—we are all drawing on our astonishment at the abundance of beauty, pain, irony, and surprise life has offered us, whether in words or music or paint. Finally, it is just wonderful to have something to look at. I was able to convince Tom to leave a few paintings

with me over the winter, to look at as I wrote this piece—but really I just wanted to enjoy them—to share his pleasure in the exact colors of a leaf, the particular pattern of its veins. All this gray winter I could divert myself by noticing how he'd gotten just the shade of the rust in the beach sand, just the buxom softness of a plate of ripe apricots or the secret coolness of a hacienda doorway, and thinking—wow, that's what art can do, extract the most meaningful detail from the most everyday thing, hold it up to the light, turn it a little, and show all the magical aspects of the ordinary world.

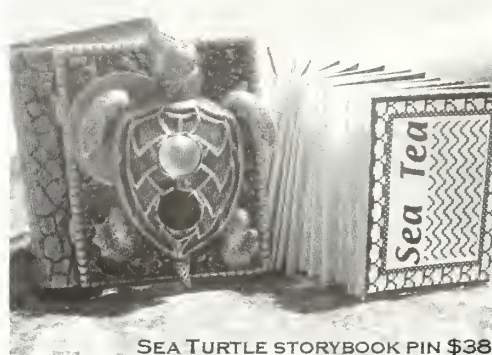
HEIDI JON SCHMIDT is author of two collections of short stories. One story, "Wild Rice," first published in Provincetown Arts, was cited as a Notable Story in the 2002 edition of Best American Short Stories.

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Painting in Boston: 1950–2000

Edited by Rachel Rosenfield Lafo, Nicholas Capasso and Jennifer Uhrhane
DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park

BY LARRY COLLINS

This lavish book is the catalog for DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park's second installment in a laudable endeavor—a grand trio of exhibitions surveying the visual arts in the Boston area during the last half of the 20th century. The first exhibition in 2000 focused on photography and the final presentation in 2005 will survey sculpture. This volume provides essays by five individuals, well-known critics and curators of the Boston art scene, writing about the history and major stylistic trends in Boston painting during these five decades. Containing over 100 illustrations this catalog honors all 67 artists in the exhibition with a full-page, full-color reproduction. It contains a chronology of important events, biographies of the artists, a bibliography, an exhibition checklist, and an index, making this volume indispensable as a resource for the study of regional painting in America.

Rachel Rosenfield Lafo, one of the curators of the exhibition, offers an exhaustive history of the Boston art scene—artists, galleries, dealers, collectors, curators, museums, critics, journals, arts organizations, civic and private institutions. All are part of this story. She makes clear that the City of Boston and the Museum of Fine Arts have often failed in their support of contemporary art in general, and local artists in particular. She reiterates that Boston society has generally displayed conservatism in its response to contemporary visual art. Exceptions there are, of course. The Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University early on collected work by the leaders of the Abstract Expressionist, Pop Art, and Color Field movements. DeCordova itself has been a stalwart supporter of New England artists since its founding in 1950. A number of progressive dealers including Boris Mirski and Margaret Brown were pioneers in introducing contemporary work from both Boston and New York, and Arnold Glimcher opened his Pace Gallery on Newbury Street in Boston in 1960 before moving it to New York. Even among the artists some of the more influential national and international developments including pop, minimalism, conceptual art, earthworks, and installation, all forms that minimize the importance of the medium of painting, never took hold in Boston. It may be, paradoxically, this lack of support for the new and experimental by institutions and collectors, this general conservatism, and this reluctance by artists to embrace non-traditional trends that account in part for some of the continued tenacious strength of Boston painting during these 50 years.

Boston in a variety of manifestations among its painters in the Boston area is John Stomberg's

subject. From the broadly brushed work of George Nick and the architectonic color planes of Barnett Rubenstein, to the exquisitely rendered and obsessively detailed pieces by Gregory Gillespie and Scott Prior, these paintings all turn to images from the external visible world. Stomberg devotes three initial pages to a consideration of realism's definitions and its perception in the 19th and 20th centuries as an art more plebeian, full of meaningless detail and lacking in ideals. This argument prevailed for a while for 19th-century academicians. Similarly, Clement Greenberg, the influential mid-20th century critic, saw figuration, especially the human figure, as a corruption of the pure ideals he espoused for Abstract Expressionism.

George Nick has spoken of his own split development as a painter, at one point producing abstract canvases and figurative works side by side. Nick's mature work, lushly painted landscapes and views of Boston, are painted on site, often from a mobile studio, a truck that he has outfitted to serve this purpose in winter as well as the warmer seasons. A student of both Josef Albers and Edwin Dickinson, Nick demonstrates a true mastery of color and sophistication in drawing.

Represented also in this category is James Weeks of Boston University, one of the Bay Area figurative painters in California who rejected the Greenbergian philosophy of purism. Led by David Park and Richard Diebenkorn these artists gathered in the life drawing studio, a feral regional group, heretically re-introducing the human figure into their previously fully abstract work. Park went so far as to destroy his earlier paintings. Week's painting in this exhibition is very calm, structured by large, simplified color planes. It is more aesthetically based in French painting than is the work of the earlier Boston expressionists of the 1940s and '50s. Their inspiration was derived primarily from Northern European expressionism.

The paintings in this "Realism" category of the exhibition vary widely, in concept as well as in competence. No amount of discourse can correct a poorly drawn cylinder in space. Philip Pearlstein once noted that the realist painter must be in top form; unlike some of his abstractionist colleagues, he could not otherwise meet the demands of this mode of representation. It requires too much planning and even-handed concentration. He might have added that it also requires a profound knowledge and proficiency in fundamental drawing skills.

"Expressionism: Boston's Claim to Fame" is the title of curator Nicholas Capasso's history of two groups of painters. The first group, which garnered national attention in the 1940s and



HYMAN BLOOM, *FLAYED ANIMAL*, 1950-1954, OIL ON CANVAS, 70" x 40," COLLECTION OF WILLIAM POSTAR

'50s, included Hyman Bloom and Jack Levine along with a number of faculty and students at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. Karl Zerbe, David Aronson, Jack Kramer, and others comprised what is still indisputably the strongest regional style to emerge from the Boston art scene in the 20th century. The second wave included some artists that emerged as part of a loose international movement during the 1980s referred to as Neo-Expressionism, while others like Gerry Bernstein and Philip Guston developed their own styles along more personal routes.

Karl Zerbe fled Germany in 1933, already an established painter, and was later included in Hitler's infamous "Degenerate Art" exhibition. He became head of the art department at the Museum School in 1937 and quickly transformed it from a timid academic institution to one vibrant with avant-garde energy. Zerbe brought the great expressionist painters Max Beckmann and Oskar Kokoschka to the school who, along with the work of the European expressionists Edvard Munch and Chaim Soutine, had profound and lasting influences on the faculty and students. The group's work emerged as a distinct regional style and individuals began to receive national and international notice. Jack Levine had continued recognition in New York and Hyman Bloom was chosen for the American exhibition at the 1950 Venice Biennale along with Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, and Jackson Pollock. David Aronson was shown at the Museum of Modern Art and Jack Kramer was hired by Kokoschka to teach in his school in Vienna.

"Flayed Animal" is Hyman Bloom's masterful

Salzburg homage to the great paintings of the same subject by Rembrandt and Soutine. This painting shows a breathtaking command of drawing and of the oil medium. Long swaths of paint range from wash to impasto, from strident whites, yellows, and oranges to deep black and alizarin. If there is a masterpiece in the show, this is it.

Of the later expressionist painters it is Philip Guston who was perhaps the most accomplished and certainly the most influential. During his years at Boston University he perfected an unlikely hybrid style of his two earlier successful periods. The first period was as a social realist during the 1940s and the second as an Abstract Expressionist. His meld of cartoon-like drawing and sensuous, thickly painted surfaces resonated perfectly with 1980s image-centered Neo-Expressionism.

The critic Kenneth Baker is earlier quoted in this book, noting that the salient thing about Boston for Boston artists is that it is not New York. Carl Belz's engaging essay on abstract art in Boston takes on this relationship and discusses the displacement of Paris by New York as the stronger influence and, in some cases, destination for Boston artists. He is confident in approaching large issues in 20th-century art, declaring that abstraction has provided the defining characteristics of painting while Cubism provided its scaffolding. He follows this with an assertion that the most serious attempts at originality have been made in the realm of abstraction.

Three generations of painters are discussed, beginning with Gyorgy Kepes, the influential painter and photographer who came to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1945 from the Chicago Bauhaus. The survey continues with artists born at the end of World War II including Rob Moore and Katherine Porter, whose lyrical, painterly meditations float above a pre-established grid. John McNamara, born postwar, and creator of beautiful heavily painted expressionist canvases, leads Belz to the observation that beauty has often become a casualty in the race to be innovative. Formal concerns and beauty have perhaps seemed innocuous to many artists in a world of tremendous social change. In discussing Rob Moore's quiet variations on the rectangle, whose ambition Belz describes as modest, he is reminded of this bit of wisdom: "newness in art is not necessarily good, but good art is always, and necessarily, new."

This last statement could be used as a



ABOVE: PHILIP GUSTON, *INSIDE-OUTSIDE*, 1977, OIL ON CANVAS, 68" x 74," COURTESY MCKEE GALLERY, NEW YORK, NY, BELOW: GREGORY GILLESPIE, *MYSELF PAINTING A SELF-PORTRAIT*, 1980-1981, MIXED MEDIA, 58" x 68," SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

warning when approaching the final section of this exhibition, "The New Painting," which contains some work that is dreadful and some that is beautiful. Ann Wilson Lloyd surveys a polyglot group of works from the 1980s and '90s, some tiny and some huge, the beautiful, the ugly, the serious, and the ludicrous, admitting that the "taxonomic urge . . . has been increasingly frustrated in the past 30 years or so, and art professionals have largely capitulated." Some pieces are made with the usual traditional painting media, oil and watercolor, while others mix in gold leaf, some glitter and even a doily. Appropriating images from photography and children's drawings, there are also art historical references to Martin Johnson Heade and Piero della Francesca. Many artists have for decades felt comfortable sliding in and out of different media, combining sculpture, photography, and painting as well as light, sound, all manners of technologies, the earth, and the body



itself. Preferring to be called artists instead of painters, photographers, or sculptors, they may tackle and incorporate social and aesthetic issues including feminism, multiculturalism, capitalism, environmentalism, minimalism, earthworks, conceptualism, performance, and narrative into their work. Among the more beautiful works are Richard Yarde's meditations on his own mortality, expressed as large nude self-portraits made from hundreds of gray watercolor-paper tesserae. They are part of a decades-long body of work chronicling his personal history and the larger history of African Americans.

It is wise to remember that this handsome book is actually a curated show catalog and not a comprehensive history of 50 years of Boston art. Many Boston area artists of equal or greater accomplishment and influence are not seen in this book or this

exhibition. According to Raphael Rubenstein (*Art in America*, March 2003), curators rather than critics are now the ones who decide what art is worthy and important, the ones who by their choices in exhibitions like this one help to establish reputations. Assuming there is validity to this argument, it is important to understand that this exhibition is constrained from being a more comprehensive survey primarily by the size of the museum's available exhibition space. According to Lafo the wealth of artists from which to choose dictated that choices be made using fairly tight geographical parameters close to Boston, and that some communities be eliminated altogether. Lafo has said, for example, that Provincetown as a source for painters for this survey was deleted because the curators felt that its connection with New York is stronger than with Boston. Secondly, the knowledge and sensibilities of the curators and those with whom they consult drive the choices. Lafo also points out in her introduction that three of the essayists were not curators in this show and wrote about artists that they did not select themselves. Despite any limitations in this exhibition and catalog, it surely must be the most ambitious and wide-ranging effort to date to survey the accomplishments of progressive painting in Boston. With this exhibition as a platform, continued study of Boston artists will bring more treasure to light, defeating the inexorable movement towards obscurity.

LARRY COLLINS is director of the Driskel Gallery and curator of vintage photography at the Schoolhouse Center for Art and Design in Provincetown. Formerly a professor of art at Massachusetts College of Art and at the University of New Hampshire, he is a painter and photographer.

Two from Two Towns

The century-long tradition of artists who have worked in Provincetown is by-passed in a paragraph-length footnote that says that the Provincetown community, already amply documented, shares deeper ties with New York than Boston. We asked the two Provincetown artists, Michel Mazur and Tabitha Vevers, who were included in the show, about their take on regionalism.



MICHAEL MAZUR

I was pleased to be in the DeCordova exhibit, twice as it turned out, but I am not a believer in 'regionalism,' feeling that it can be a buzzword for provincial or reactionary. Hyman Bloom was a product of Boston upbringing and art education which tended to be Eurocentric; Guston wasn't anymore a Boston artist (where he commuted to teach for a few years) than he was a California artist (where he was educated) or a New York artist. In a global context, working in Boston or in Provincetown or on Monhegan may say something about life-style preferences, but really, I find it says little about esthetics. The use of the description local artist has always seemed, to me, limiting and irrelevant, only a way for a journalist to "locate" an artist in the community for the casual reader.

LEFT: MICHAEL MAZUR, *MIND LANDSCAPE—AFTER CHAO MENG-FU*, 1994, OIL ON CANVAS, COLLECTION OF DECORDOVA MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE PARK

BELOW: TABITHA VEVERS, *WHEN WE TALK ABOUT RAPE*, 1992, OIL AND GOLD LEAF ON HANDMADE PAPER, COLLECTION OF DELIA SHERMAN AND ELLEN KUSHMAN

TABITHA VEVERS

I saw the show as a welcome celebration of 50 years of painting in Boston—at times traditional, eccentric, and often in between. I moved to Boston in 1980 after graduating from college and I returned after a decade in Provincetown when I married Daniel Ranalli in the mid-'90s. In both places, I found an exciting and supportive group of artists. But I was always surprised there was not a stronger P-town Boston connection, given the proximity. As far as regionalism goes, I don't think the term is relevant to my generation. We live in a world too international, diverse, and complex to get overly concerned about how our work relates stylistically to the artist next door. In my own case, I've always been an odd duck, simply believing that being honest

about my work is about being true to your own

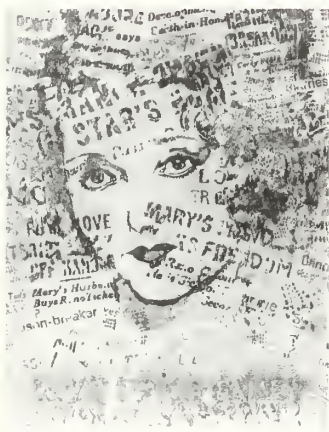


ART TALK

An artist statement is the verbal expression of a visual artist. It may be a remark written on a scrap of paper and pinned to the studio wall, where it may remain for daily guidance. It may be any expression the artist believes is authentic. Often it is a motivational credo connected to the artist's desire to do the work in the first place.



DENNY CAMINO



ANN CHERNOW



JENNY DING



JANE ECCLES

CID BOLDUC

I believe there are defining moments in our lives that, if we are lucky, are savored, shared, and survive. I am grateful to Provincetown for a wealth of these moments. Painting is more than picture making. Success is the picture that makes the human connection.

ROB BROOKS

"Reality Show" is a series I have been working on since 1997. My goal is to paint the point in every day when reality and abstraction coincide, both visually and psychologically. I depict contemporary urban life at moments when the common becomes surreal. What is real becomes questionable. Viewers will enjoy voyeuristically contemplating scenes they would otherwise only glance at.

DENNY CAMINO

I need to feel the paint touching the surface, the instant appearance of the image, the immediate energy of color. The objects I paint are related by their intimacy of solitude and movement

MIKE CARROLL

I am more interested in the questions images ask rather than the answers they provide. I am fascinated how ideas may be constructed and executed, how, when painters make certain decisions, their work becomes universal. I practice how order is made, lost, and restored. Carefully attending to a work over long periods of time assures its eventual essential strength. I don't want narrative in the picture, but I welcome stories that occur when I am making a piece, so the ghost of the story is present, but not the story. Time seems mostly stopped, frozen on a beat of movement as it passes through a moment.

CATHERINE CHAILLOU

Contemplative and lazy born, I was drawn to shaping animals in clay as a way to avoid facing reality. Clay takes on volume when it is kneaded; when it is fired with a final enamel gloss, it includes earth, air, fire, and water. The animals stand for the innocent, the naive, and the free, plus they provide an unending staple of material. I meet each one of them in forests, books, and cages. For a while, I become one of them.

ANN CHERNOW

My prints are based on specific scenes from and impressions of '30s and '40s American films. I focus on women, using period settings, and reinterpret the image. Contemporary models blend present and past and I try to create a sense of déjà vu. I am drawn to the crazy plots and desperate characters of the "women's film." I attempt to reconstruct illusion into familiarity that is comfortable at first glance, but which evolves into something unsettling; while keeping the momentary gesture, film stereotypes are transformed into flawed, nearly recognizable people. The concept of audience identification is important to me. Viewers often think they recognize someone in my prints, perhaps from an old family photo, then later question their initial assumption.

KEN CORBETT

We rely on patterns to form the familiar, the reliable, and the daily. Yet, patterns can occur only with variance; a pattern cannot be repeated without difference. Harmonies are to be found. But so too is dissidence. It is the process of repetition that I wish to bring to the viewer. Through repetition, I set out to structure the viewer's experience of looking. I want to draw on repetition as it opens a mind onto the possibilities of reflection and reverie. Consider here the repeated footfalls

of a walking meditation. Consider here the recurrence of ceremony. Consider here the potential of grace as it resides in the tension between our reach for the regular (the common, the daily, the same) and our reach beyond the regular (toward individuality, a rupture, transcendence).

JENNY DING

I adopted egg tempera as my principle medium during my two years of graduate study. As my understanding and mastery of this medium improved, my artistic vision became simultaneously more precise and more mysterious. My paintings have adopted a traditional Chinese format to a distinctly western medium, egg tempera. All beautiful things in this world are either transient or mortal. Beauty is often accompanied by the not so beautiful. Caterpillars are precursors to butterflies. Magnificently colorful, opiate flowers create poison. In my created world, beauty and ugliness coexist. I am the creator in my work.

REBECCA DOUGHTY

"Short Story #3" The animals of my childhood were my closest companions and favorite amusement. In the books I read and the cartoons I watched, animals were cast in amazing roles that engaged them in complex human predicaments. Their curious adventures were full of humor and irony and often a sense of impending danger. Fondly remembered, these creatures are re-cast to tell more stories, expressing fear and joy, anxiety and comfort.

JANE ECCLES

When I began some years ago, I did abstract paintings on very large canvases. After many moves and relocations, the sense of excitement engendered by this experience was gradually lost



KEN CORBETT



SHARI KADISON



ELSPETH HALVORSEN



LAMAR PETERSON

as I began to discover the pleasure of working on site, directly from nature. I went from a kind of interior landscape to a more recognizably overt landscape painting. And since I have not relished the idea of painting from photographs, my studio painting has centered on clusters of small objects or any combination that has resonance.

MARTY EPP

An object with history is important to me, and I create this history through layering of abstractions, doodles, allusions to classic or modern artists, and sometimes to nursery rhymes. There is usually an intimate element rooted in obsession or memory. The relationship of this element to the whole of the picture raises questions about how clear or obscure I want to be. As I work, a non-specific narrative space becomes a personal, intimate, and specific architectural space. I nudge images so they take on other identities. I look for evidence of growth and decay, tension between weight and lightness, and the pull of gravity on silence and sound.

KRISTEN FEHRENBACH

I resist blatant beauty and search for the enigmatic in the everyday. Here is my photo of a kitchen sink, revealing a small part of a larger story.

RICK FLEURY

For me, the simplest gestures make the truest marks. I want to revisit an exact moment, again and again. I am not drawn to abstraction of such moments. I want the solitude of a wandering low tide or a sun setting for what seems the last time.

MIRIAM FRIED

Kristen pleases the masses. They understand her pots, lighthouses, and fruit bowls. I have been emphasizing an austere use of color. A painting is abstract when it is impossible to recognize the slightest trace of the normal ground of our everyday reality.

SUSANNE GREENE

My life with clay recalls a line by Pablo Neruda: "I have a crazy, crazy love of things." I have been working almost exclusively in clay for 12 years, captivated by its incredible willingness to mimic almost any material.

ELSPETH HALVORSEN

Box constructions have been my primary art form since 1977, and they combine all my earlier methods of working. I use found objects such as bird skulls, horseshoe crabs, eggs, stones, and loose sand. I often use a photograph, a cast clay face, foot, or hand. On part of the back wall I may make a painting. I build bridges, ladders, and tables. With the fond memory of grade school geometry, I enjoy working out the angles of a many-sided box. I use the compass constantly to divide and measure spaces, to make arcs in doorways. With a pencil held within a string looped around two upright nails, I found a perfect ellipse could be inscribed, its proportions determined by the distance between nails and length of string. The gift of a set of hole-cutters gave me the idea of making holes in the roof and sides of the boxes to let in light and cast shadows. This allows me to suggest the passage of time; as the light changes or the viewer moves, the atmosphere of the work changes. Large magnifying glasses, found at junk stores, are used to send a beam of light on the objects below. (If left in the sun, the boxes might self-ignite.) In this piece, I installed a small music box hidden within the box, which can be wound up from outside the box and which gives the piece a haunting mood. Sometimes I use seemingly sentimental symbols, such as a perfect female torso, hoping to offset the ominous reflections and dark shadows that threaten its vulnerability. My intent is to evoke a sense of a peaceful but disturbed mystery. I am constantly asked, "Do you make the boxes yourself?" To me, this is like asking a poet if he writes his own poems. Occasionally I am given boxes that work, but the construction is my own, and their hand-made

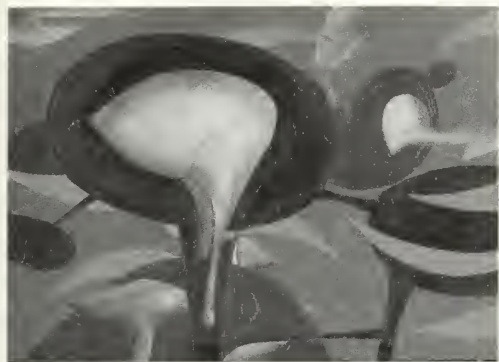
imperfections are necessary. I rely upon the notion that there is majesty in the most universal and elemental objects, and I set them on a stage to preserve a contained image of fragility. Perhaps my work is autobiographical, a sort of diary.

ROBERT HENRY

I first came to Provincetown in 1952 to study with Hans Hofmann. Hofmann became my second father and Provincetown my second hometown. Provincetown, an extraordinary combination of contradictions, fits my temperament, my beliefs, and my art. It is a fishing village at land's end that is as cosmopolitan as a large city. With one of the most beautiful harbors imaginable, its honky-tonk downtown is equally fantastic. Diverse people accommodate their differences in a not always easy, often intense, interaction. I aspire to an art equal to that intensity. I left the Cape for a number of years, only to return because I missed living in a place where art and artists are not a decorative addendum but an integral part of society. I rarely paint from nature, but Provincetown is present within and without, in nature, body and spirit. The famed "Cape light" does not enter my paintings directly. I was trained as an abstract painter and most of my work comes out of a process of developing images from drawings done from the imagination. I see light with my inner eye. I feel the wetness, movement, transparency, buoyancy, and the danger of water in my own liquid body. The elements are both metaphoric and real.

JIM HOLLAND

Since the summer of 1978 when I vacationed on Cape Cod, the shore, from Maine to Key West, has been the center of my work. Light and space near the ocean expands and the colors can be brilliant or nearly monochromatic. Forms, whether a beached catboat or light slanting on clapboard, are given a stage. I've always responded to the solitude and stillness one can feel on the shore. I am largely self-taught and my approach



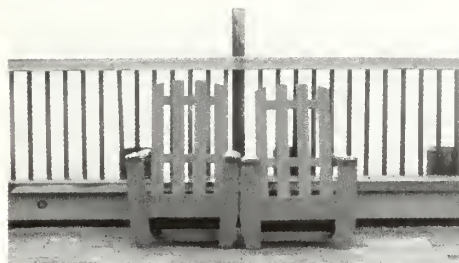
MICHAEL CARROLL



TIA SCALCIONE



KRISTEN FEHRENBACH



R.J. KATZ

to painting has been influenced by artists like Edward Hopper and by modern photography.

PETER HUTCHINSON

My involvement with natural order and impermanent intervention in that system has taken many forms. I feel a desperate urge to record disappearing environments. From land artworks reaching from the heights of a volcano to the depths of the seafloor, I observed what was happening and what it signified to me. Lately, in collage landscapes, I have made environments that, though they don't exist in nature, are idealized views that range from the snow mountains of France, Switzerland, and the Rockies to my own quarter-acre garden in Provincetown. I see patterns that stretch time and place as well as emulate my own experience. Sometimes, ideas leap from the visual to the verbal.

GREGORY KAMMERER

The most dramatic change in my work occurred when I vowed for the most part to stop working from photographs and tried to resurrect images of landscape from both memory and imagination. Working this way, without the guidelines of a carefully rendered sketch, can be both scary and exhilarating. As another layer of paint is added or scraped away, aspects of landscape begin to become evident. My recent paintings have a radiance and directness that was absent in my earlier work. Equally important as my studio time are hours spent rowing a single skull on nearby rivers and ponds; images of water, clouds, reflections, and darkness are logged and stored for reference down the road.

SHARI KADISON

I create environmental boxes using found objects and organic matter. The history inherent in the original use of the material enriches the work. Objects and scraps of paper, combined, lose their identity after being dragged through my personal history. The delicate balance of story-

telling and visual poetry is sometimes humorous, sometimes dramatic. The ultimate goal is to keep your balance as you walk the tightrope to truth.

R.J. KATZ

In my 25 years as a photographer I am still fascinated that one can capture a moment.

TANIA KRAVATH

As a daughter of immigrants I respond strongly to stories of challenges that shape awareness and sense of responsibility. Surfaces achieved through wood fired kilns draw me, for the mark of the flame, the traces of fire and ash, the memory of the journey imprinted in the form. Firing clay in a wood kiln is labor intensive, requiring the cooperation of a community. There is a truth here that expresses our being in the world and I find myself moving back and forth from the specific to the global, from the metaphor to the literal.

ANDRE LAROCHE

The painting becomes the fetishized mapping of the essence of the person that makes it. The physical experience holds immense pleasure for me, and is the driving force for understanding the content.

PETER MADDEN

My visual work is essentially an ongoing scrapbook of everyday contemplation, fetishes, discoveries, and memories. I am drawn to the least promising materials: rusted metal, brown paper bags, stones, weathered wood, ash, worn fabrics. These materials enrich my work with the past life they inherently carry. I often use a book format because it allows me to incorporate my interests in collage, writing, photography, and moving pictures. Most of my books fall into one of three categories: biographies, travel logs, and scrap books. These are my means of expressing admiration and postponing loss.

JOEY MARS

My painting is an inter-dimensional search for

the proverbial wave, seeking the wave in hope of tapping into and riding the energy. Like true jazz, when you don't know where it is going but you know it's going, the flow of improvisation plays a pivotal role. I have a sort of Darwinian approach with my imagery and characters, enhancing and amplifying genetic traits. Spilling it out on canvas. Giving birth to the piece. Wrestling with it. Shaping it. Riding it. Looking at it, staring, reshaping, another image here, push that back, bring this forward, and look again.

DERMOT MEAGHER

My drawings are made with pens, pencils, brushes, sticks, and my fingers in charcoal, black ink, walnut ink, sumi ink, water colors, tar, tea, coffee, and whatever else I can find within arm's reach to make a mark. I find endless delight in drawing the harbor and nudes of all sexes.

MICHAEL MCGUIRE

My art always evolves from my imagination, a compilation of places I've visited. Visible are the ocean contours of Truro and Provincetown, but also I also see colors and shapes of Isla Mujeres, Mexico, where I visit. After formal training in sculpture, I began to feel the need for color in my work.

JENNIFER MORGAN

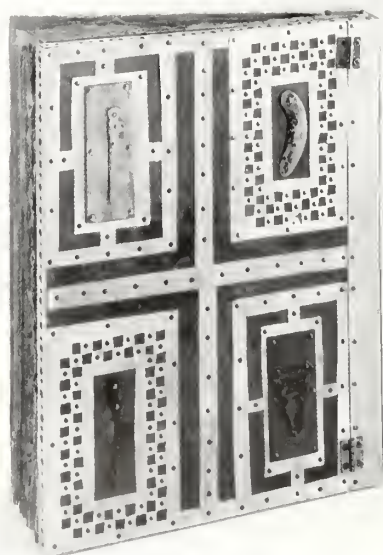
I don't try to capture what I see directly from my surroundings—the morning sun hitting hard on the dunes, the light that turns to gold in the afternoon. I feel I cannot do justice in oils to what nature is capable of. Instead, I give a simplified view of what I see. The scenes are pared down to a few essential colors and the smooth lines or strange patterns that I find swirling in outdoor space.

HILDA NEILY

The most beautiful and interesting part of painting for me is studying the color of natural light. Sometimes I think of it as painting the color of the air



TANIA KRAVATH



PETER MADDEN



RICK FLEURY

mixed with the color of whatever else I am looking at. One day I realized, when I was outside painting a landscape, I am actually standing in the painting. I feel the direction of the wind and whether the air is warm or cool. I hear the waves. Life around me becomes part of the painting. I go back to the same spot at the same time of day until I have stated the color notes as truthfully as I can. I don't work on landscape painting inside because I miss the aliveness of nature, my greatest teacher.

LAMAR PETERSON

I am currently producing a series of works on paper that chronicle the lives of a fictional family. They live in the American dream, exemplified by state of the art technology, traditional values, and a carefree suburban lifestyle. On the surface my images suggest familiar places and themes such as happy people with bright smiles, idealistic landscapes, and family outings. Below the surface is evidence of inner conflict, cynical human, and fear.

ANNA POOR

These new pieces, created directly in wax and cast in bronze, juxtapose the solemn antiquity of their material with the realities of living in 2003. The new work is a visual record of naming and taming night terrors. Three-dimensional creatures co-exist with formal relief that are visually self-contained, and forced to deal with growth, chance, and the lurking danger of my mirror world.

SKY POWER

Self and Other series combines the abstract with the identifiable human form. As a result of the loss of a relationship, I experienced recent losses in my life. My grief is my growth; letting go of another is an act of love that defines the human condition.

CAROL PUGLIESE

I've lived and worked in Provincetown since '81 and I've had the luxury of experiencing every season, its *commedia dell'arte*. My paintings reflect the dramatic, theatrical story of telling details. "Table Top Temptress" is the character in my current work. A surrogate for passion and pain, she projects her emotions with gleeful, indecent delight.

TIA SCALCIONE

My pictures are filtered landscapes; they are memories of a past time and place. My observations are distilled in my mind and result in pictures that are a combination of intuited and conscious decisions. I remain captivated by this place since my first visit seven years ago.

MERRITT SCHNIPPER

There is a gulf between what we know and what we are. My work bridges that gulf, reaching out to the realm of myth and reminding us of our own inscrutable nature. I work in bronze and steel, materials whose beauty, durability, and connection to fundamental technologies underscore our own transformation from dust to animal and back to dust. I embrace the human drive toward iconography and symbolism—the defiant expressions of our fleeting, exuberant existence.

VAUGHN SILLS

I have chosen objects from nature, one by one, found them, dug them up, preserved them—a squirrel's skeleton, a bird's nest, a mushroom. In each photograph I have also placed my family's copy of the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* published in 1932. For years I looked up unknown words in this book. I notice the word *lupine*, which grow wild all over Prince Edward Island where I now have a cottage. The six letters in the word *lupine* represent the tall stemmed purple, pink,

yellow, and white flowered perennials, whose pal-mated leaves turn a dusty grayish green, then brown after the petals fall off, and whose seed pods have, by the middle of August, a hairy surface that just before twilight glitters and softens the sunlight shining from behind, causing the air to become magical, with dragonflies, buzzing insects, and darting swallows, creating a nearly, but not completely, invisible dance around it. Neither the six letters of *lupine* nor my long string of words convey what I love, yet the words matter, for they affirm the existence of the plant it represents. The construction of my tableaux, like each object, is fragile and temporary. The sapling will die without soil and water, the skeleton will fall apart, and the treads holding together the nest will let go, the mushroom will decay, lose its balance, and topple. The pages of the dictionary will continue to yellow, the binding continue to loosen, and my beloved signs of life will eventually disappear.

DUANE SLICK

In narrative traditions, to tell a story of tragedy one must always begin by telling the ending first. I once believed the weight of such expectations functioned as a cultural given for the artist of Native American descent. Its rules stated that we cry for a vision and accept our place in a single grand narrative of history and representation. But the laughter of Coyote saturated and filled our daily lives, echoing through lecture halls, so powerful as to be distracting. I forgot my place in linear time and now I work from an untraceable present.

PETER WATTS

I remember reading years ago a statement by Wolf Kahn: "The point is to re-do Rothko from nature." This is what I am trying to achieve. Rothko's paintings are simple, colorful, and full of light. They sing. For the past 36 years I have



JOEY MARS



VAUGHN SILLS



FRANK YAMRUS

lived in Wellfleet. I know the woods, ocean, and bay like the back of my hand. Seeing this world in four seasons provides me with ideas and feelings that I express in my paintings. I believe subject matter is the foundation of painting, but the subject is really secondary. The results should tell some elemental truth. Abstract Expressionism had a great influence on me. As a student in the '50s and living in New York in the '60s, I was influenced by works of the time. When I moved to the Cape in 1970, I became more involved with nature, working from it ever since. I've been asked why my paintings are always of unpopulated landscapes. I don't know, except to say I walk every day in solitude and this comes through in the work. Living in the National Seashore helps me see the land in its unspoiled form. I try to imagine what it looked like centuries ago. I am searching for a Garden of Eden and that brings me to Paradise Valley, where I live and paint.

FRANK YAMRUS

In the winter of 2002 I planned to travel along a 500-mile stretch of the Great Divide in Western Canada from Banff National Park to Jasper National Park. Here are the Columbia Ice Fields, traces of the last glaciers that retreated about 10,000 years ago. The Columbia Ice Fields are the largest chain of ice fields along the Great Divide, feeding six major glaciers in the mountains, and they are considered the hydrographic apex of North America. Water melting flows to three oceans, the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic. It was here the geology and geography, climate and weather, were to serve as my metaphorical backdrop. Water, supreme in shaping our topography, guides my photographic inquiry, especially toward its form as ice or snow. However, with no cooperation from Mother Nature and limits of my own resources, my trip to the Columbia Ice Fields never happened. These

images were created in my studio on Dehon Street in San Francisco. Ice, the only constant in this photographic equation, was a momentary absolute. It immediately melted, reminding us that time is life's true constant and that memory is fogged by time. Water and light were the variables defining lines, textures, and shapes by augmentation or obliteration, thus creating the

illusion of place. These images beg for a story that only the viewer can provide.

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MARY BERGMAN

The Spooky Art: Some Thoughts on Writing

By Norman Mailer

Random House

Ten years ago I lived in Provincetown, in a swamp on Harry Kemp Way, and every morning when the weather was good I would look up through our large front windows and see a shirtless, somewhat short, somewhat heavyset man slowly jogging by our driveway. "Look," I'd say to my wife. "There he is." And she would come to the window and together we would both marvel at him, at his complete indifference to the mixed blessing of his physical presence, and at the sheer wonder of having *him*—as it were—traipsing through our front property. He was Norman Mailer, of course. Only in Provincetown, we thought. He wasn't a particular literary hero of ours, at a time when we were beginning to understand that there were no literary heroes, but we admired his boldness, both on the page and on our street. He ran—as I would later tell my students that they should write—with a "fuck you" attitude. By that, I mean that he ran without any care of what anybody else thought of him, and in

We never got to meet Mailer, although at my job directing a local nonprofit I occasionally dropped him a note asking for money, but now we have the next best thing. At 308 pages, Mailer's *The Spooky Art: Some Thoughts on Writing*, published on his eightieth birthday, cannot be far from spending a day or two in conversation with

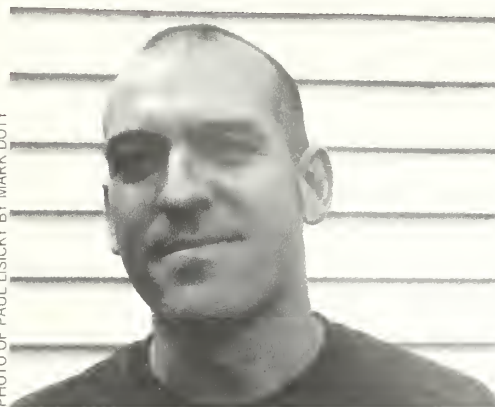
him. From the beginning, he invites us to skip and skim, to read in a linear fashion or to read as our curiosities take us, and while it is not a slim volume, the book has only a few tracks to follow. There is the compelling track of his ascent into the literary stratosphere, and with it the concomitant track of his perspective of the treatment he has endured by literary critics, but there is also the track of his keen literary analysis, and, finally, and perhaps sometimes less compellingly, the track of his advice to younger authors. Mailer has stitched it all quite carefully together, so that in fact *The Spooky Art* can be read in sequence, but it is ultimately more entertaining if you skip around, take as much of one line as you care to, then double back and find something else more sustaining.

The actual prose, of course, is excellent. Style, Mailer argues, is "character," "a reflection of identity." And his style, despite his protestations otherwise, is indeed inimitable. He is inviting, charitable, kind, presumptuous, arrogant, snide, defensive, difficult, painful to be around, and utterly charming. "A good skier rarely worries about a route," he notes. "It's the same thing in writing: You have to have confidence in your technique." While the literary world these days is filled with utterly (and perhaps mistakenly) com-

ABOVE: EVERY DOG GETS HIS DAY: ON THE EVENT OF MAILER'S EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY AND THE PUBLICATION DATE OF *THE SPOOKY ART*, TOWN MANAGER KEITH BERGMAN PRESENTS A CITATION DECLARING JANUARY 31st NORMAN MAILER DAY IN PROVINCETOWN.

A CHAT WITH PAUL LISICKY by Sherry Ellis

PHOTO OF PAUL LISICKY BY MARK DOTY



Paul Lisicky's books include the recently published memoir *Famous Builder* (2002), a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award, and the novel *Lawnboy* (1999), a BookSense 76 selection and an American Library Association Honor Book in GLBT Literature. Currently he is at work on *The Gods of Luna Township*, a novel set in New York City and on the New Jersey shore. He teaches fiction and creative nonfiction at Sarah Lawrence College and has led writing workshops at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill, and at other writing conferences. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, he received fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and the James Michener/Copernicus Society. He divides his time between New York City and Provincetown, where he is a member of the Work Center's Writing Committee. Recently he spoke with me by phone from his apartment in New York City.

SHERRY ELLIS: You've written *Lawnboy*, a novel, many short stories, and now *Famous Builder*, a memoir. How does it feel to read about your own life in print?

PAUL LISICKY: In any memoir, the writer must pick and choose the images in support of the theme. That's not to suggest that I've soft-pedaled anything, but any life is so fluid. I think we're all capable of thinking one thing one day, and something else entirely the next. So *Famous Builder* is a version of my life, but not my life. I think every moment in time is too complicated to dramatize in all its dimensions. You try your damndest to do that, but the fact that there's always more to say makes the task of memoir bearable.

SE: In her book *The Situation and the Story*, Vivian Gornick states, "the narrator becomes a persona... a tone of voice, its angle of vision, the rhythm of sentences, what it selects to observe and ignore are chosen to serve the subject." How do you think you've created a persona as the result of writing *Famous Builder*?

PL: I'm drawn to any kind of art that embodies the stamp of individual character. In writing *Famous Builder*, I tried my best to enact speech

patterns and points of view that I like to think of as unique to me. But there's a bit of distance between who I am at any given moment and who the speaker is. The speaker's tone, his choice of detail—both are impacted by the moment in time from which the writer creates. There's no reason to think that I couldn't write about the same material covered in *Famous Builder* at a later date from a different point of view. The actor Dirk Bogarde apparently did that in a series of memoirs he wrote over the course of a lifetime. In one book his mother is kinder than a saint; in another, she's a disaster!

SE: *Famous Builder* begins when you are in elementary school, with you and your fellow classmates changing identities with one another and trying to fool a substitute teacher as to who you are. Why did you choose this beginning?

PL: It seemed false to me to write a book that explored just one thread of my identity. If I were writing a book that focused only on my life as a gay man, I'd have to leave out too much of what I know about myself. Similarly, if I wrote about myself solely as the grandson of eastern European immigrants, I'd run into the same problem. That's why the opening paragraphs are about the frustration of carrying a single name to the grave. I wanted to write a book that represented the complexity of how we understand ourselves. By foregrounding that classroom scene, the book argues against the notion that anyone is built of a singular identity.

I also thought it was important to open with a group drama. The boundaries in that classroom loosen, and there's a sense of joyousness about the collective. A certain anarchic spirit emerges again and again in the book, in which the speaker understands himself not as a single being hemmed in by his mortal body, but as a part of something larger. His participation in the collective enables him to participate in eternity, if only for a moment. If you're not pinned to a single name, then you can keep going on and on, right?

Overall, the opening is there to warn the reader that this isn't going to be a conventional memoir in which the speaker comes to some radical self-understanding following a series of crises. The book's work is to ask questions about identity.

SE: From age nine to 14 you designed your own communities, inspired by Levittown in New York. Do you find that writing is also a way of building communities?

PL: Any writer is engaged in the work of naming, making shapes, structures, circulation patterns—all the tasks of the city planner. A book is a community. It's brought to life with characters and houses that the reader enters imaginatively.

SE: How has music inspired your writing?

fidet writers, perhaps there is none more deserving of confidence than Mailer. And so this book, circling back and forth in real time, "moves as naturally toward flux" as a novel. "If a writer insists on a specific tone, despite all inner warnings," Mailer writes in one of his moments of more obvious advice, "it can even limit the varieties of experience that will enter the book." By sewing together this particular hodgepodge of interviews, essays, rants, ridicule, and the like, Mailer allows so many tones into these pages that—despite the fact that it is a book about writing—*The Spooky Art* has the salutary effect of being actually limitless, like a great conversation with a naturally engaging personality.

So, while there is more than is probably necessary about enduring bad reviews, and while the book is less generally engaging when it clearly intends to offer guidelines to "young authors," because of the inimitable style, *The Spooky Art* actually becomes a book that is hard to put down. In terms of the line by line writing, for example, Mailer's comparisons are always useful and funny in a delightfully bold but offhand manner. Not reading reviews of one's work, he writes, "would be like not looking at a naked woman if she happens to be standing in front of her open window. Whether ugly or lovely, she is undeniably interesting under such circumstances."

For the reader who does bear a keen admiration for the man and his oeuvre, Mailer shares intimacies that the aficionado can savor. When he was writing *Advertisements for Myself*, for example, he was also trying to quit smoking, "and as a corollary of kicking nicotine, I was thrust into the problem of style itself." And in regard to his own prognosis for the future of literary art, he admits, "I can only add that I am not able to believe in my own pessimism too thoroughly or why would I have bothered to put together this book?"

And it's a fine book, really. "Name any great novel that didn't weary you first time through," he argues. "It's the guys who pen wonderfully sweet books, however, who are the real monsters. You know—they kick the wife, cuff the kids, and have the dog shrinking in horror. Then their books come out: 'X once again delights the reader with his sense of joy.'" In *The Spooky Art* Mailer once again delights the reader with his sense of self. He knows who he is and he knows what he looks like on the page. And—to his credit—he isn't afraid to appear topless and in motion. The result, like so many of his books, is art and entertainment, excretion and advertisement, pleasure and pain. You land where you want, you hit the ground running, and—like the writing itself—you never seem to end up out of breath.

FRED LEEBRON is author of three novels, *Out West*, *Six Figures*, and *In the Middle of All This*. He teaches at Gettysburg College.

PL: I hope that music informs every sentence I write. I often think about the relationship between the singer's phrasing and the writer's sentence making. Virginia Woolf's attention to the musicality of language is one of the reasons why she's important to me. Sometimes when precise description fails me, I type nonsense syllables in order to represent the pitch and contour of the music I hear inside my head. I, of course, go back to rewrite those passages later!

In addition to melody, I think about harmony. A writer can only achieve harmony metaphorically, but certain tensions in the language can suggest such an effect. Joy Williams, for example, sometimes uses descriptive elements like "dully gleaming." That yoking of opposites achieves a kind of happy dissonance.

SE: What is your musical background?

PL: I started playing and writing music at six. I played—still play—both keyboards and guitar. As a kid, I used to come home from Mass and pick out the songs I'd heard on our piano. I started publishing liturgical music at 15 and recorded an album of these songs at 19. But I knew I wasn't destined to go through life as a church musician. That world seemed circumscribed, cut off, even though I enjoyed writing music to be performed by a congregation and amateur musicians. It was a strange time to be involved in music. You could either be a

schooled musician or a pop musician who played in bars and coffeehouses, and it seemed a failure of character not to make a choice. I chose the latter, although I wanted to straddle both worlds. I wanted to write accessible music that was harmonically and melodically idiosyncratic. That's why I still love Joni Mitchell and Laura Nyro. Joni's restlessness continues to inspire me. Her experiments sometimes fail, but she's always reinventing herself, which is her great lesson to me.

SE: Eudora Welty remarks in her book *On Writing*, "When Chekhov says there were so many stars and that one could not have put a finger between them, he gives us more than one night, he gives us that one night." Is it easier for you to share specifics about yourself in memoir or to create details in your novels for your characters?

PL: It's hard for me to draw a clear distinction between my work in the two forms. I think the most compelling art lives somewhere on the borders. Most of *Famous Builder* is structurally similar to fiction. Scenes are organized around pivotal moments where the reader is expected to infer meaning from the drama on the page. There's not much in the way of rumination and interpretation. The work's closer in form to Joan Didion's essay "Los Angeles Notebook" than it is to more conventional nonfiction narrative. On the other hand, my novel *Launboy* takes the form of an invented memoir of a

young man's search for connection. His interior quest for meaning is the machine that drives the narrative. So in terms of form, I write neither pure fiction nor pure memoir.

SE: In addition to Virginia Woolf who are some of your favorite writers?

PL: I'm a huge fan of Flannery O'Connor. I love the intersection of the metaphysical and the social in her work, the conflation of humor and dread, the earthly and the otherworldly. Her story, "A Good Man is Hard to Find," continues to teach me. The list might change in a year, but these writers have been crucial: Flaubert, Dickens, Salinger, Bernard Cooper, Joy Williams, Elizabeth Bishop, Elizabeth McCracken, Jane Bowles, Anne Carson, Kathryn Davis, Mary Robison, Mary Gaitskill, Gish Jen, Lorrie Moore, Grace Paley, Mona Simpson, Michael Cunningham, Denis Johnson, Nick Flynn, Richard Powers, Alexander Chee. And of course there's my partner, Mark Doty.

SE: How do you think having a partner, who is also a writer, has influenced your development as a writer?

PL: We talk about books; we talk about teaching. We talk about ideas that we're grappling with. When Mark's particularly crazy about a work of literature I make sure to read it—and visa versa. We're each other's first readers. I want to write work that knocks him out. I want to see a whole open embrace on his face. When he's less than thrilled with something, I can see that on his face, and know I have more work to do.

SE: Given the many facets of your identity as they are manifested in *Famous Builder*, which of these components do you think you're manifesting in your new novel *The Gods of Luna Township*?

PL: I'm interested in thinking about reinvention. *The Gods of Luna Township* is about a young woman who's both sustained and depleted by her devotion to a particular place. She's troubled by the fact that the houses in her New Jersey beach town are being replaced with monstrous trophy homes. She leads an organization that opposes that trend, and the collision between the capitalist turn of her community and her own dedication to cultural preservation overwhelms her. The book wants to think about the value of place and the dark lures of capitalism. I do think the escalation of real estate values we've seen all over the country in recent years has profoundly affected community life, and I want to write a book that explores that situation.

SE: How did you decide to write from a female point of view?

PL: At the end of last week's workshop, one of my students was worried that her male narrator didn't sound enough like a male. Someone



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else said, better to excavate the interior life of the character than to pay too much attention to the exterior qualities of gender. That struck me as astute. I think we can get ourselves into trouble when we ascribe stereotypical traits to characters. In *Luna Townships*, more often than not, a character doesn't conform to perceived expectations. The protagonist's brother-in-law is often sensitive to the point of tears, even though he's big and burly, ostensibly heterosexual, the kind of guy who scares people as he walks down the street. I spent a lot of time trying to avoid writing a female narrator, maybe out of the fear that I couldn't pull it off. So the book was in third person for a couple of years. But there was something inert about the point of view. It didn't rise and fall; it didn't breathe. I decided to try a paragraph spoken in her voice, and I had 50 pages in a few weeks.

SE: So it was a breakthrough?

PL: As a writer, I'm looking to be surprised by my own work. I usually have a preconceived notion of what the next book will be before I actually sit down to write it and I tend to plod along trying to inhabit my preconceived notion—until the work gets stubborn. At that point I press my forehead against my desk until I give into what the work wants to do—and then it takes off. I probably have to write 120 pages in order to get 15 that I can live with.

SE: The landscape of the New Jersey Shore, Cherry Hill and Florida play heavily in your work, especially in your memoir. Can you please comment?

PL: I usually start with landscape. I don't know how else to give the reader a precise sense of the protagonist's emotional life except to ground the work in the sensory particulars of place. Without the smell of the trees, for instance, I can't move imaginatively.

SE: What were the challenges for you in shifting to writing your memoir?

PL: After years of making things up, it was a relief to write from the template of a particular memory. You can go anywhere in the creation of a piece of fiction, while memoir is constrained by what happened. Fiction writers seldom admit to this, but sometimes the freedom of fiction can be oppressive. Joni Mitchell has a line about "the crazy you get from too much choice," which makes absolute sense to me. Of course, once the memoirist foregrounds certain details or incidents, the narrative can't help but take on a life of its own—another kind of problem. The memoirist is always being pulled in two directions: he's attempting to honor the truth of memory at the same time he's attempting to honor the internal logic of the story. How to do those two things at once? The task is next to impossible, but the best memoirs are energized by that tension.

What role does fact play in this struggle? Whenever I'm asked about allegiance to fact, I always answer that memoir is less about facts—

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the realm of journalism—than it is about how the writer feels about the facts. The emotional investigation is the story. A quote from Marilynne Robinson's novel *Housekeeping*: "Fact explains nothing. On the contrary, it is fact that requires explanation."

SE: What about your experiences as a teacher of writing? Do you teach memoir, short fiction, novel writing, and nonfiction?

PL: At Sarah Lawrence I'm teaching a yearlong class that's half fiction and half creative nonfiction as well as everything that's in between.

SE: How do you think you build communities in your seminars and classes?

PL: I try to make students feel safe. I bring my own struggles to the table and do everything I can to demolish the hierarchy between teacher and student. I try to foster an atmosphere in which students are supportive of one another, rather than competitive. It's always easier to tear something apart than to name specifically where it's entirely itself. We spend a lot of time working on how to do the latter. Of course the humbling thing about teaching is that you're only partially in control; much of its success depends upon the social chemistry of the group, the building's heating system, the time of day on which the class meets.

SE: Do you think writing memoir has changed you as a teacher?

PL: I often ask my young budding novelists, "how does this character make meaning of her life? How does the narrative enact that?" Those are the central questions of memoir, but they're also relevant to the writer of fiction. By and large, I'm more interested in helping my students envision their characters' inner lives than I was before I started experimenting with nonfiction. I want to help them crack open the life below the surface, the deep private dramas we withhold from one another as we walk through the day, as we go to the supermarket and pay for groceries.

SE: Your mother wearing bell-bottoms: that was a wonderful image. How does she feel about seeing herself as a character in print?

PL: She's read the book three times. She takes it with her to the supermarket. Waiting for my dad to come out of a store, she picks it up and reads a passage out of context. She's admitted to going to bookstores all over Broward County and sneaking the book onto the front tables.

SE: Males, too, have strong presence in *Famous Builder*. You write, "My father is a storm . . . if he were a painting, he'd be a Jackson Pollock . . . all splash and squiggle, no open spaces, no room to breathe." Do you remember how this comparison came to you?

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PL: I started writing a list of images and chose what I hoped was most accurate. My process is fairly expansive. When I first sit down to write, so much is gibberish, unformed notes to myself about possible scenes. I try to put everything possible in on the first draft. Then I need to weed the garden.

SE: How did you choose *Famous Builder* as a title?

PL: For a while I called the book *Pygmalion Salon*. That title reflects the central theme of self-reinvention, but it seemed a bit arch. *Famous Builder* is more down to earth; it's closer to the spirit and style of the individual pieces. I thought it was important to use the word famous: from that young boy's perspective, fame signifies transcendence and deliverance; famous people are rewarded for being more fully themselves. That naivete strikes me as very American.

SE: What scenes were hardest for you to write?

PL: "Naming You" is about my mother's twin brother, Paul, who was killed in a car accident 20 years before I was born. It seemed necessary to think about how his absence was a defining presence in our household, responsible in part for shaping the relationship between my mother and me. After all, I was named after him. But I didn't want to trespass on my mother's pain; I didn't want to "use" it simply to make art out of it. Luckily, the piece is important to her, but I'm not sure what I would have done if it had caused her grief.

SE: Is it possible to have artistic integrity in a case like that?

PL: Writing about real people whom one cares about brings up complex problems. For one, those people probably tell the story of a particular incident entirely differently to themselves. How many of us can imagine our own words and gestures contributing to a pivotal moment in a loved one's imagination? I wouldn't want to be the parent of a memoirist! Fortunately, my family is intuitive enough to know that the book is only one way of telling the tale. And I think they forgive me when I get things wrong, or know that I've conflated two different events in order to make a point. I've tried my best to write them as engaging and dimensional characters. No reader cares about anyone who's idealized or vilified. And it helps if the writer is implicating himself in the dramas explored on the page, if he's willing to express uncertainty, doubt, vulnerability—some gap between what exactly happened and the limitations of language. Once the writer is superior to the characters he's writing about, the whole project becomes suspect.

SE: How long did it take you to write *Famous Builder*?

PL: Four years. The first section was "Luck Be

a Lady," which was written in the spring of 1998, just after I'd signed the contract for *Lawnboy*. The pressure to write a new novel was off, and I gave myself permission to write whatever I wanted to. Four pieces emerged within four months—which shocked and invigorated me, because I'm a ridiculously slow writer. A pattern emerged after a while: a period of extreme productivity would be followed by silence. Then I'd start writing again.

SE: When you chose to end the book, what was happening in your own life?

PL: A lot of new material came in the fall of 2001. Many of my artist friends weren't able to work in those weeks after September 11th; at first the notion of sitting at my desk seemed utterly pointless to me as well. But over time the desolate side of my character lost out to the side that insisted on going forward. I managed to write about 50 pages of new material between late September and the beginning of January. Mark and I had just moved into our new apartment in Chelsea on September 3rd. We didn't have furniture yet or a TV. Writing became a way to channel all that chaos into form.

SE: When you returned to writing your memoir, did you focus on life celebrations or on the catastrophes of life?

PL: In "On Broadway," the final section of the book, the sense of everyday life is much more provisional than in "Luck Be a Lady." "On Broadway" suggests, what's the point in feeling shame if "planes are flying toward us as we speak?" In other words, if everything might end tomorrow. The narrative has a seize-the-day quality that might not have been present in my earlier work. It celebrates and despairs at the same time.

In the wake of September 11th, the world seems so much smaller. As Americans, we can't safely distance ourselves from war and terrorism any longer. For decades, our geographic isolation allowed us to buy into the myth of security. We didn't have to be concerned with the consequences of our country's foreign policy or of the expansion of global capitalism. Now we're all implicated in it. I remember taking the train to school one morning after September 11th and looking out over Manhattan and imagining the deserts of Afghanistan imprinted over that landscape. This is the new world, I thought.

But the truth is, tragedy has been in our midst for years: AIDS, poverty, hunger, homelessness, racism, homophobia. Now that we're living in a state of collective emergency, I feel a greater responsibility to dramatize the pressure of these forces upon the inner life. It's impossible to take everyday life for granted these days.

SE: You have said that one of your goals in *Lawnboy*, was to write a book in which no one

died of AIDS. Can you comment please?

PL: Most of *Lawnboy* was written at the time when protease inhibitors became available. Until 1996, it would have seemed misguided to write about AIDS without focusing on the travails of the dying and their caretakers. But things shifted with the advent of new drugs. I wanted to write a narrative that thought about the ways in which the epidemic continues to impact our relationships, our attitudes toward time, attachment, and mortality. How does the possibility of contracting—or of passing on—a life-threatening illness complicate our sexual lives? How to form an ethic that deals with that heightened situation? And why does the little engine of desire persist in spite of exterior threats?

SE: If you were reviewing *Famous Builder*, what would you focus on?

PL: The interrelationship between the structure and the themes. The repetition of patterns and metaphors. I'd like the reviewer to see that the book dramatizes a particular vision of the world. It's about ideas.

SE: What advice do you have for fiction writers who want to write memoir?

PL: Read, read. Bernard Cooper, Frank Conroy, Mark Doty, Joan Didion, Montaigne, Vivian Gornick, Nabokov's *Invitation of a Friend*, Lucy Grealy's *Autobiography of a Face*. Some fiction writers mistakenly believe that memoir is inferior to fiction, but both forms demand an attention to craft. Any accomplished memoirist uses the same tools as the fiction writer: scene-making, precise language, coherent structure. I think fiction writers can learn a lot about structure from writing memoir, because in memoir structure is central to its success or failure.

SE: What have you learned about yourself through writing your memoir?

PL: If anything, I've learned what I don't know! *Famous Builder* is less concerned with answers than it is in asking questions. The speaker, searching at the start of the book, is still searching in the end. I don't know what it means to be a body in time or a self in the social world, but I'm obsessed with the investigation of those things. That's what keeps me writing.

SHERRY ELLIS is the author of The Goode Books, a novel in progress.



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The Radiant

By Cynthia Huntington

See Through

By Frances Richard

Four Way Books



The black and white cover photo of Cynthia Huntington's first book, *We Have Gone to the Beach*, was one to fall in love with. A couple sits on the beach in sunglasses and swimsuits, slim and healthy—he, twisting back to adjust the towel perhaps, a young man's tendon and muscle, hair dashed back like a pilot's, his back to her but not ignoring her; she, smiling and beautiful, hand on left shoulder (rubbing in sunscreen?), gazing at her beloved. The photo, aged and squared-off, is one of those 1970s Kodaks that describe a certain part of all our lives—a silent kabuki moment captured and framed, ready to hold whatever meaning we must assign it.

With its youth and humor, its early progressions, adventures and apartments, *We Have Gone to the Beach* describes the tectonics of reluctant maturation: energies congealing into production, small tragedies into knowledge. In "A Flame," the speaker makes a love-covenant as her beloved lies delirious with fever somewhere in Nigeria: "I told the sky that started at my forehead / how fully we belonged to one another then, how we had become each other's life and help." Yet when the poem shifts to a scene three years later in California, the couple now with son and dull daily life, it is a "familiar anger" that confirms this covenant. The speaker, still wise to moments and honest with the air, admits, "And I know that what I told the forest then, / when I prayed we would come through danger / and fear, believing love had joined us in one / course, in need and at rest forever, is true."

This truth of "The Flame," with its necessary complications of anger, danger, and fear, is the subject of Huntington's new book, *The Radiant*. A word of caution for those readers who fell in love with the cover photo from *Beach*: if you read this new book, you may never be able to look at that photo in the same way again.

The speaker in *The Radiant* continues from

Beach, and there can be little doubt that it is the poet herself. She is up front with the reader from the book's epigraph, and by the second poem we have it in open terms: "Old love, / . . . How can you have broken my heart, / . . . Looking into death again / in some woman's eyes." This betrayal frames the first section, "On the Atlantic," which follows the speaker's progression in a landscape tied to mind, memory, and pain. The opening statement, "Sea Meadow," declares,

I write this in the voice
of a woman who wakes
and watches her mind
struggle to run from what holds it,
restless movements
that do not touch the root.
She is not young.
She knows her life will be
the things that have happened,
and her feelings will not move,
merely shake and flare in the light.
I write in her mind, her life,
because I will never be
that person. Look at me—
I am grass; the wind moves
through me

This is a subtly daring move: to declare poems written in the voice of an existence one is refusing. One will not find a gentler acknowledgement of writing's construction, one simultaneously making the humane insistence that, artifice or not, things matter to us and we must communicate them. In the subsequent poems of the section, the speaker accuses her "Old love," then moves out into a landscape of romantic reveries punctuated by sleep, seascape and death.

The second section mirrors the first, but with a different dilemma that makes the difference insufficient. Rather than the "Old love," the second poem confronts the speaker's "Multiple Sclerosis," establishing a parallel between the beloved's betrayal and the disease which "grows hard, and cannot be repaired." Thus, the first half of the book establishes us in betrayal and death. In "Vale," however, we see how deeply this poet is able to exist in nuance, to run her fingertips over the intertwining essences of these facts.

As in: the valley of the shadow
of death, the cloud, the fall,
the unknowing. As when he said:
"I've had another life"
and his face was lit with escape.

. . .
and angels come down on ladders,
bearing messages. They carry
the page held open to our names:
let's not be here when they come.

The complicit complications of these two unworkable "escapes" trace the same maps and blueprints every one of us secrets away in our own cell.

Readers who have been made speedfreaks

of the liminal by reading some of the younger contemporary poets—poets who often cleanse their work of human psychology (unless it clings symbiotically to a product)—may get antsy in the first half of this book. But hold on, the work is just beginning here. The emotion gathered into the first two sections begin to collaborate on their unbearably necessary, horrible work. Most often, the slow unfolding of a poet's genius (the reason we constantly reread her) is one of some mystery peeling away by revelations. Huntington accomplishes the opposite, and more honest, here—beginning with naked revelations, her unfolding proceeds with the slow accrual of human perception upon mystery. Huntington whispers in our ear the moment the starting—gun goes off: Die. This simple knowledge makes for complicated reading. At their most stunning, the poems in *The Radiant* cannot be parsed critically. They require the key of another human's emotion, to which they are, alone, irreducible.

Four intense "Curses" pace the third section, reciting occult repetitions of reclamation. No punches are pulled and one comes to realize how much poetry does hold back, usually. Given the world we live in, shall we not demand more uppercuts and frontal attacks from our concerned and intelligent poets? Death and the other woman trip over each other here—both embodied only just beyond the bounds of perception, where we cannot reach and destroy them. Beside these wrathful forces is set the one-act play of male vanity, the curse of its own creation culminating only in small, useless insanity. In "The Invasion of Canada" we find him attacking alone,

In the mountains, among pines, beside a
small stream
that runs left and right over rocks,
fast and shallow and loud, he sits and weeps.
His destiny is too big.
No one invades a nation anymore.
Not alone, on foot, with gun and a radio.
His loneliness is cold water
that makes the rocks shine.

The closing section of *The Radiant* moves toward reconciling its unforgiving energies. Part of the literary tension of this work arises from our sure knowledge that the "progression" here is natural only within the constraints of the bookbinding, that it was experienced and probably written in tumbling disorientation. Huntington allows some bleed-over of emotional chaos between the sections, but only enough to keep the artifice honest. The final pages reveal the speaker slowly removing herself from the landscape: "I start to climb / the night air, like treading water and / thinking about being nothing substantial, / losing everything but still secured / in this darkfull world. Doing without // all that, beat upon beat, I practice / not hearing my heart, not breathing" ("Nothing"). In the unspeakable calm and honest reverie of "Lilacs" the speaker—with full awareness—removes herself into the landscape. After husband and son have planted young bushes and "My husband stamps down the earth down / carefully" she tells us, "I will lie back, watching water move / across the surface of a

puddle. Perhaps / some noise will reach me—a dog's bark // or a door slamming down the street— / some sound not meant for me."

This movement into the earth, which in the opening poem could be read as a defensive posture against pain ("I'll never be that person . . . I am grass"), now reveals itself as preparatory meditation. Huntington has not just set us up, for she suggests that the parallel between pain and preparation is a coincidence, though not entirely in the sense of a chance happening. The final poem, "Evening, Race Point, Light Rain," accedes that coincidence is "the idea that things and events / somehow speak to each other across distances / without touching. That the unmet / has been prepared for us." Few writers have the subtle eye of imagination to transform perceived experience into such received manifestations, to lift the veil on the rhetoric of our secular horrors.



FRANCIS RICHARD

Forthcoming in September is *See Through*, by Frances Richard. These two very different books show the commendable scope and depth available to independent publishers such as Four Way Books. Richard, who writes for *ArtForum* and is nonfiction editor at *Fence* magazine, is preceded by the wide rumor that she might be a genius. *See Through* does nothing to dispel this ugly gossip. I will advise you to bring a dictionary to this book—not as one brings a map to drive through foreign land but, rather, as one wants reaches for the rewind button at the end of a gorgeous film.

Comprehension is not Richard's first order of business here but neither is it elided. Even when their setting is indeterminate, these poems have the noisy urban crush to which we say, yes, press more upon me:

Damask'd drapery swagged flush
frames its glass, exterior volutes grim
with pigeon-shit, rain-smell of oxygen
releasing

and a pressure, as of minnows
nibbling, exigence, zero, the

perfect skin on every body,
thing. ("Integument")

We get this heady push not only from the world-words, but also urging out of consciousness. There is something Yiddish-like in the oral-intellectual exuberance of these lines, the walking through and talking to and absorbing everything.

There are moments that, out of context,

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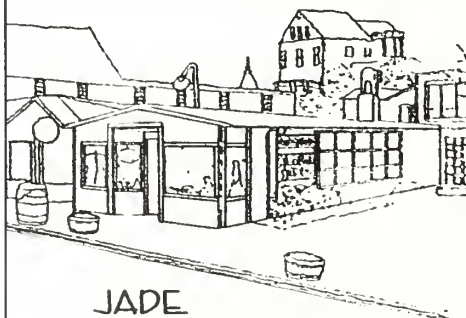
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would strike the reader as outrageously overdone—"Silver backing leaching lichenlike" ("asparagus bed"). But this line itself is balanced by the chatty, casual description that precedes it: "The cedar chest contains: a bed-pan & a death mask cast in plaster, very lovely: I kid you / not." And we know that there is no kidding here (although there is humor); the speaker experiences the world in all its alliterations and linguistic perspiration. We quite easily come to understand her existence to encompass a "rumpled / bed / room grid-ded / with glimmer and paneled / in total sub-meaning / denoting your phrases, your / instrumentality weft of a physics in action" ("umbrage nocturne").

Whether this is the world as it is, or as it is negotiated and represented, the individual reader can decide. "Notebook #1," however, shows that the passageway to any classification passes through many sliding (and reflecting) doors. The speaker herself is on a search, "Looking for: whatever it is. Know when I find it. Like: / soft holes in it, spinal, something tangible. Excitement but not constant, not that puissant. Hush hush. It is inborn or extrinsic, what/how is it." We can't be sure if the speaker is shopping a store for the notebook, shopping the world to put in a notebook, or shopping her notebook to add to a poem. It doesn't matter. Our reading does confirm, along with the poem's final line, "An Experience."

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The "experience" of these poems is more than standard mimesis. Or, the author might suggest it is mimesis making full use of its language tools. There are countless films that use some version of the pan across waterways collecting to New York City. None of these films are about the waterways of New York City, but the directors use the footage to give a feeling—one that the audience cannot stop to clear up. Richard, who takes great pleasure in stopping, is not the kind of party-poop who clears up; she uses the exact leisure of language to zoom in, enhance, and launch languid and frantic attacks:

Unclearly: is ownership

a picture does pleasure give confidence. The
sodden mattress
bulges, silky pallet
in the weeds, read bubble-writ, enshadowed
tags spraypainted. Your name

for this, the tender lurid surface means
the river doubles as the river. Does stability—
what. Something.
Does it please. ("Silver Cup Studios")

If you are the kind of person who is affected by language, this book can steal your life. The book's sixth and final section uses the poem "A Lava Lamp" to begin with a "Gist insinuating / gracious crisis, keen / parenthesis." Readers open to Richard's linguistic re-training will know, will literally hear, the "kiss" that is coming. Popular radio, of course, also allows us to anticipate lyrics, but it does so within well-ingrained cultural formulas—we do not anticipate the new, we simply know the old. Richard re-tunes our language-radar to a gain sensitive enough to detect an entire landscape from its earliest word-blips.

Soon, it arrives:
Craving to be fluent, quasi kiss. Premise gar-
bling at
inept speed, innards shifting, ozone ooze,
a lava lamp

Though kiss elongates
in the whistling, in the viscous elemental
isn't-even-there, a Muzak
crooning gimmick

These poems are infused with everything the notebook takes in: social experience, critical theory, mathematics, rock and roll, oceans and cities. But, really, what they are meant to be is half-muttered in the dirty streets of the last or dawning days, to be sung under water out loud in the shower.

ROBERT STRONG is a student in the Poetics Program at the University of Denver. He recently received a Mellon Research Fellowship from the Massachusetts Historical Society.



The End of Being Known

By Michael Klein

University of Wisconsin Press

It is the mischief of Michael Klein that I like most. It looks out at you from his eyes, of course, but also seems to hang about him, like silk sheers, like the rapture that surrounds saints in Renaissance paintings: Michael Klein in his naughtiness which is like a halo. It is, no doubt, his air of gleeful misbehavior (perhaps the native state of the raconteur) that has always endeared me to him. He is the kind of man my grandmother would have called a *rascal*.

Arriving at the address appointed for our interview, I realize that this Greenwich Village street-corner is the site of the Equinox Gym. It is here, sitting on the sidewalk below the gym's silver awning, that the author intends us to discuss his latest work, his memoir of sex, *The End of Being Known* (to be published this fall). Michael leans back against the plate glass of the gym's exterior. His ginger blonde locks are chopped shorter than I have seen them. He is svelte, nearly clean-cut in a brown bomber jacket that suggests self-collection. His impish eyes dart with the delights of his purview as beautiful boys pass through the drifting door of the Equinox—I realize my project to be rather like interviewing Proust in a Madeleine shop.

"In sex," says the author, in response to my asking what it is we can learn through sex that we can learn nowhere else, "we experience our own death. We move into this other time. I'm fascinated by the idea of the orgasm as a little death, as the place we inhabit during sex, which is always approached differently, but which is always the same. Just like being horny is always the same physical experience, but always approached differently."

This is, in brief, Klein's theme—sex as a form of knowing, of communicating, the time and geog-

raphy of sexual experience. It is a theme which has, Michael tells me, utterly dictated the book's form—ten essays relating (often harrowing) vignettes of his personal history, while refusing, through style and organization, to progress through time. In prose that recalls Gertrude Stein (another writer who groped to express the interrelations of time, sex, and language), Klein writes:

"He wanted to unknow me after knowing me. But really, I told him, it was too late to be anonymous. He knew me already. I worked very hard at him knowing me until he really knew me. So he had to know me. But then he didn't want to know me, and I didn't know why. He didn't consider how time had turned into something close between us, into language underneath language that was keeping it going."

This knowing amounts to an irrevocable intimacy, beyond resolution. *The End of Being Known* reveres the mysteries provided by the opportunity of touching, and its author, to his credit, doesn't attempt to wrangle answers from them. "This is a book about consciousness," he writes in his preface, "about not turning the light all the way on." As Michael says, as he sits, distractedly glancing at the Village's bodies on their errands of transformation, "I don't have answers, but I have moments."

This is not Klein's first exploration of the altered state of sexual desire—it is a topic addressed throughout the poems of his Lambda Literary Award winning collection *1990* (published by Provincetown Arts Press in 1993). In one poem he writes of a lover: "he was in his body

and I was under it . . . / lowering into an act / without approval, and . . . coming back, / out of time, changed by something early: like peace."

Klein has devoted much thought to the genre of memoir. (*capturable Conditions*, published by Persea in 1997, detailed his career in the world of thoroughbred horseracing.) When I ask him why memoir holds such attraction for the "outsider," his answer suggests the craft of his written sentences: "Memoir is the outsider's genre. It is the record of reckoning with the world, of being struck by lightning, which I think explains the poet's attraction to it as well. In order to be successful, a memoir can't merely remain the story of a life. It has to take in the larger world. The memoirs of the 'other' tend to do this automatically—their inner lives having been much more interesting and hard-won."

I ask Michael if this appreciation of outsider status accounts for the claim in his new book that the '70s "were the best time in history to be a gay man," that "mainstreaming thinned [the gay community] out . . . we're like everybody now." In the '70s and early '80s, he insists, we were "less vain, more self-critical; there was a spirit of intellectual inquiry that the community, as a whole, is lacking today. There was almost a hippie kind of consciousness, an inclusivity that politicized sex and energized art."

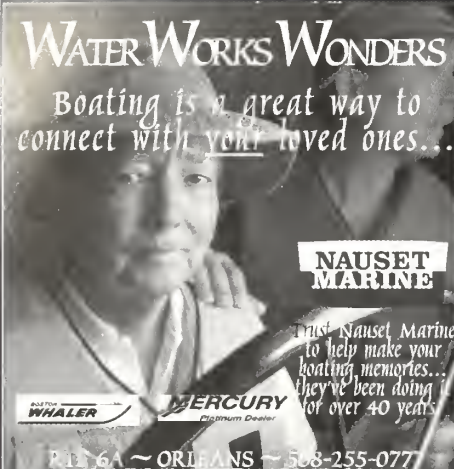
Considering the page space devoted to the Club Baths in *The End of Being Known*, I ask Michael if this free-love Era of the Baths has been captured in such books as *Faggots and Dancer from the Dance*. "I think so," he says. "I love the writing

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in those books. But then, the '70s and '80s were *capturable* times. They were charged with new ideas, with new ways of living. Much less so than the '90s. In the '90s, mainstreaming became more important than being on the outside, than being on the margin. And what people don't understand is, the margin is a place. It is not outside a place. The outside is not a result of not being on the inside. And it was the radicalism of the outside that made us interesting. I've always maintained that the principal crime of heterosexuality is dullness. Now the gay community is following suit."

As we talk, various stragglers from the annual Muscular Sclerosis Walk pass us by, looking self-satisfied and exhausted. I mention a New York Times article which emphasized that no one marched for diseases before AIDS. Klein speaks of his recent involvement in the compilation of an ACT-UP oral history, funded by the Ford Foundation. "ACT-UP was an extraordinarily successful movement because all that sexual energy was channeled into political action. It was a movement born not only out of principle—the way the anti-war movement was born—but also out of frustration. The difference is that the anti-war movement, lately, hasn't seemed to be able to get much accomplished, which, of course has to do with the administration acting like a regime and not listening to what citizens that don't agree with it have to say. AIDS activism was strange in a way that being against a war isn't so strange—most people are more likely to know someone anti-war than they are someone concerned with finding a cure for AIDS. ACT-UP was a movement of its moment and its demise was, in a way, built in, the way it isn't in the anti-war movement. We don't think there will always be AIDS, the way we think there will always be a war."

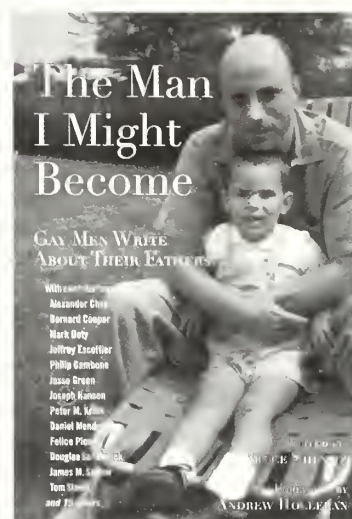
I have noticed that Klein will often phrase the language of his speech for the sake of startling, for the sake of forcing aural meaning to correspond with literal meaning—a capturable time, movement of its moment. When I make reference to this trait, the poet's trick of language efficiency, and its presence within his prose, Klein cites the inspiration of James Agee, William Maxwell, and Sherwood Anderson—the practitioners of "good and strange American speech." In their writings one could "hear how they heard language. Of course, what I do is quite often bad American speech. But the intention is the same. To involve the word's heard-life with its idea. James Agee did that better than anybody. So much of the way writers I love write non-fiction, I think, is borrowed from his attention to the detail of sound."

By the last of this, Andrew Hood, Michael's partner, has emerged from the gym's interior; he appears freshly exercised and vital. Andrew figures prominently in *The End of Being Known*; he is at the crux of Michael's discovered solution to anonymity. I give him my name with a handshake.

Sensing that the time of our curbside conversation has expired, I ask the author a parting question: what is *The End of Being Known*

about? He turns to give me full attention, and at the same moment seems very far away, bemused by the simplicity of my question. "It's about being able to live with the choices you make—honoring those choices. It's not enough to emerge victorious. You have to emerge altered. That's the surprise—you get, I get, to be this guy. I get to make this life. Even when it shouldn't be possible."

ROBERT LELEUX is a poet and memoirist. His *Memoirs of a Beautiful Boy* is forthcoming.



The Man I Might Become: Gay Men Write About Their Fathers

Edited by Bruce Shenitz

Marlowe & Company

An anthology of memoirs risks the awkwardness of dinner with strangers. The editorial burdens intrinsic to such a project would seem more likely to require the skills of a tenured burlesque producer than those of a veteran magazine maker like Bruce Shenitz, the mind-force responsible for this collection. The challenge of equitably arranging 28 autobiographical selections for the purpose of drawing a single, broad story from spliced bits of gathered lives might have left Minsky clutching for Valium. Shenitz is more than a cogent compiler. He has accomplished what I had previously thought impossible: he has managed to say something new about homosexuality. This he has done, ironically enough, by returning to the most overworked theme of the queer canon, the childhood home.

Regarding *mothers and gay sons*, Violet Venable—the dowager of Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*—speaks these seminal lines: "Lose your husband, you're a widow. Lose your only son . . . you're nothing." It is impossible to retrieve, from our cultural storehouse, dialogue of symmetrical heft concerning relationships *between gay men and their fathers*. The rarity, and flatness, of this father's representation is the point of *The Man I Might Become*. He has remained buried, in the public imagination,

within the expendable portion of Mrs. Venable's family equation.

Of the essays collected in *The Man I Might Become*, many seem deeply familiar in their tales of American paternity. To the extent that all men are engaged in skirmishes of masculine definition with their fathers, these stories are uncomplicated by the factor of the sons' sexuality. The fathers depicted are, as usual, physically hyper-manifested and emotionally vanquished (see Kevin Bentley's "Six Crises of Bullmoose"), or gentle and generous though not quite able to fathom their sons' manhood (see Paul Lisicky's "Tools"). The volume's strength, then, is in its ability to startle its readers with the familiar. No doubt the basic resemblance these stories bear to those of straight sons will provoke many gay men to rethink the relationships they have shared with their fathers, to wonder how little indeed may have been different had they borne desire for the fairer sex.

Together, the volume's essays form a private history of the "reasonable" expectations of the last century's gay men. The assembled stories span generations and document an evolution in the reactions of fathers to their sons, in what the two groups might hope to share. In "Flapjacks," Joseph Hansen writes that, in his early 20th-century youth, "for only one reason would you come out to your father: because you hated him and wanted to cause him pain." Such a passage is juxtaposed to the frank and gentle understanding shared by Felice Picano and his father in "Driving Mr. Picano," set in contemporary time. The willingness of Picano's father to recognize himself in his adult son, and to praise his son's masculine authority, by praising his driving, suggests the political strides made by a generation. Not that the anthology suggests a blanket rosiness to recent relations between gay sons and their fathers. But when the paternal bond sours in contemporary essays, there is, in the voices of the authors, a regret which stems from the post-Stonewall understanding that *more* is possible. When, in "The End of the Beginning," Patrick Rose's father rebuffs his son's affections, we understand that, in this era of increased openness, a real potential has failed to be achieved.

Like looking upon your naked parent, reminiscence is characterized by simultaneous compulsions: to see, and to turn away. Placing the past in letters can hold particular difficulties for queer people. In "Home Movies," Bill Hayes finds an adept metaphor for remembrance in the eight-millimeter movie projector his family used to view his recorded childhood. He writes, "the overheated projector chewed up pieces of our films. The story suddenly stopped in place—a frame knocked off the sprockets—and imploded. Faces melted ghoulishly on the screen. We could smell the film burning." Memory, for many of the gay men writing in *The Man I Might Become*, is a noxious, warping machine that sears as often as it illuminates. It is to the anthology's credit that it does not romanticize reflection; it acknowledges that certain exhumed images catch fast fire.

Finally, this collection is to be admired for its portrayal of taboo desire: that of son for father.

This sexual tension resounds throughout the volume. James A. Saslow declares in "Daddy Was a Hot Number," in tones of both camp and reverence, "all gay boys are in love with their fathers." Gay and straight men search out their sires, the men who represent their masculine origin. But when gay sons "go to meet the man," as *The Man I Might Become* is brave enough to tell us, this pursuit is also romantic reaching. The search for any parent is daunting, but how could the object of such riveted desire, that of both heir and lover, ever reveal itself? In light of this impossibility, the essays often end in implicit ellipsis. To this story, the writers seem to say, we can provide no ending.

ROBERT LELEUX is a poet and memoirist. His *Memoirs of a Beautiful Boy* is forthcoming.



The Rise of the Creative Class

and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life

The Rise of the Creative Class: And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life

By Richard Florida

Basic Books

Hardly anyone likes the idea of class—people dislike the word itself. Most class definitions divide us down economic lines. They tend to parcel and segregate us, telling us where we stand in comparison to others. Classes, identified and codified, are clearly part of our society. It's a way of telling "us" from "them," putting up barriers or, in other cases, taking down borders. We all know there is a ruling class and a wealthy class, as well as a middle class, working class, and service class. Now at the dawn of the 21st century, an economic development professor from Carnegie Mellon University, Richard Florida, has defined a large new class that cuts across others, a definition based on creativity and diversity. He makes an exciting sociological case for a newly discovered class—the creative class, a group that includes nearly every segment of society and creates a powerful economic force. His book is a compelling analysis of contemporary social structure. He defines a force that cannot be ignored.

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According to the author, the creative class, like most other classes, has been years in the making. It comprises 38 million people in the United States, totaling more than 30 percent of the population. Professor Florida proposes that—from the societal upheavals of the past 40 years, Vietnam War to Watergate, Civil Rights and Feminist Movements, and the technology and communication boom of the late 20th century—a new population group has arrived. He defines this creative class as the segment of our society that chooses to free itself of the daily work schedule of our parents' generation, where many spent nearly a lifetime working for the same company, on nearly the same schedule, working in the same attire, in roughly the same work environment. Today, a new class cuts across wealth and race lines, choosing to create a structure of their own, rather than allow a structure dictated by the norms of the past. They have taken their cues from artists and scientists who have long worked on a less rigid schedule, but in reality are at work all the time. Members of the creative class choose to "front load" their working lives, making money in their early years and then doing what they enjoy later, certainly well before they hit retirement age. There is new work attire (casual), a new work place (home), and a new work schedule (24/7). Perks and benefits are different too, as they can include everything from child or parent day care, to health club memberships. A majority stays at one job for less than three years. They speak of their careers, as opposed to their jobs.

The core of this new cluster are those pursuing careers in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music, and entertainment—anyone whose function it is to create new ideas, technology or content. Creative professionals in more traditional fields such as business, law, and health care share the community that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit. The working or service classes are paid to execute a plan. The creative class is paid to create the plan.

The author began his research by asking why cities like San Francisco, Boston, and Austin became such successful communities at the recent turn of the century. Nearly every region strove to attract the computer industry. But creative people don't cluster around jobs, Florida writes. They cluster in places that are centers of creativity; here there happen to be jobs that value individuality, meritocracy, diversity, and openness. In his well-documented research, he found that the communities with companies that drove economic growth in the later part of the 20th century were tolerant, diverse, and open, "because this is where creative people of all types want to live." From Boston to Washington, San Francisco to Austin, Gainesville to Provo, Huntsville to Portland, Florida, an author who seems named after the prettiest state, says the new class drives a creative economy. Cities that meet the challenge can thrive. They tend to move away from traditional notions of urban

development and jobs dependent upon the creation of the next suburban sports stadium or shopping mall. Instead, they look to develop communities abundant in high-quality amenities and experiences, openness to diversity of all kinds, and the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people. The most successful cities are those that have the combination of technology, talent, and tolerance, combined with the gold standard on the tolerance issue: the acceptance of gays and lesbians. Thus, Florida argues, many members of the creative class look to communities and companies with stated acceptance policies toward gay people, thinking that those communities will be accepting of all, and thus them.

Only time will tell if this book will be another sociological bonanza, deserving of a place alongside Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of American Cities* or Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. But early indications are that *The Rise of the Creative Class* and its author are off to a running start. Hundreds of thousands of copies of the award-winning book are now in print, many outside academic circles. Florida has become the after-dinner-conference-speaker of the arts set from Albuquerque to Anchorage. From these findings, we must ask, can communities learn and grow, becoming better places to live?

HUNTER O'HANIAN is director of the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

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WILLIAM J. MANN
WHERE
THE
BOYS ARE



Where the Boys Are

By William Mann

Kensington Books

William J. Mann never thought he'd pen a sequel to his best-selling first novel, *The Men from the Boys*, memorably set in Provincetown. "I don't like sequels," says the author, who makes his year-round home (albeit with considerable amounts of travel) in Provincetown's West End, along with his partner, Dr. Tim Huber. "I like leaving things ambiguous. Who remembers that TV movie sequel to *Gone with the Wind*? I sure don't. I like wondering if Scarlett ever got Rhett back. I don't want to know."

But sequel he has penned all the same. *Where the Boys Are*, released this year from Kensington Books, is the aptly titled follow-up to *The Men From the Boys*. You don't need to have read the original to understand the new book, but it might help make the experience even more vivid. And if his mail is any indication, there aren't lots who have not read the original. Bombarded for years with requests from readers to tell the next chapter in the lives of Jeff and Lloyd and their friends, he finally gave in. "I've written three books since, but *The Men From the Boys* is still the one I get letters and emails about, at least a couple a month," Mann says. "And so many of the letters ask, 'Where are they now? What would they be doing today?' I thought [writing a sequel] was a good opportunity to explore some realities of contemporary gay life using characters we already knew."

Wearing his other hat as a journalist-historian, Mann has been acclaimed for his research into the Hollywood film industry. Last year, *Salon* called his *Behind the Screen* "the book of the moment" for its insightful look inside the studio system. His *Wisecracker*, the story of gay actor William Haines, has been optioned for a film, and he's currently writing a biography of legendary film director John Schlesinger.

Among readers, Mann is perhaps best known as a trenchant chronicler of contemporary gay life. In the new book, just as he did with *Men from the Boys*, Mann cuts a fascinating slice of gay male America, with Provincetown a major setting once more. *Where the Boys Are* is a fast-paced mix of sex,

love, grief, fear, friendship, drugs, dancing and camp—the stew of gay life in the 21st century. This time there are three narrators: Jeff O'Brien, the protagonist from *Men From the Boys*; his on-again, off-again lover Lloyd Griffith; and a new character, Henry Weiner, a former 98-pound weakling turned hunk muscle-boy escort. Using the gay party circuit as backdrop, Mann mines his territory for moments of keen observation on the state of gay culture, circa this moment.

Perhaps that is what has made Mann's fiction so successful. Few writers offer such a compelling, accurate lens on what happens, or happened, today—an ability Mann credits to his training as a journalist. "I'm out there," he says. "I'm on the scene. I'm not locked up in some ivory tower observing from afar. I love gay life and gay culture, and I'm so tired of reading all the self-castigation of it. You can't pick up a gay magazine or newspaper and not read some article from some gay right winger saying we're too this or too that, and then turn the page and read some lefty's diatribe that we're not enough this or that."

TIM MILLER: So you don't find any deficiencies in gay culture?

WILLIAM J. MANN: Of course there are deficiencies. There are deficiencies in any culture. My point in the book, though, is to stop all the caterwauling once in a while and actually celebrate what we've got going on. There's a lot of joy and fun and affirming qualities to gay life. That's why I used the circuit as a backdrop, because it's all about celebration and revelry.

TM: Isn't it kind of hard to talk about celebration and revelry right now, with the war in Iraq and the threat of terrorism around the world?

WJM: Actually I think there's no better time to talk about such things. The powers that be are vested in keeping us scared and on edge. There was talk that the White Party in Palm Springs ought to be canceled, just as there was talk that the Oscars ceremony should be canceled. I think in both cases it would have been a mistake not to go ahead. We need to remember there's still joy in the world. Bush and his henchmen don't want us to relax and have a good time. If we do, we'll start realizing they're all a bunch of frauds.

TM: What do you say to criticism of the circuit scene as being all about illicit drug use and unsafe sex?

WJM: Absolutely there are negatives. I don't shy away from them in the book. But I think too much ink has been spilled lambasting circuit parties for their supposed drug use and unsafe sex. Sure, lots of guys who go to circuit parties have a problem with drugs and someone with an addictive personality or low self-esteem can be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of something like the White Party. But that's not a problem with the scene itself. It's a problem of the individuals. Any slice of life you want to choose

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will have its problems. What I was interested to write about was the experience of brotherhood the circuit gives to the characters in the novel.

TM: Did you see the movie *Circuit*?

WJM: I did. I thought it was terrible. I have no patience for films that merely mimic back some prevailing notion the culture has latched onto. "Circuit parties lead to death" is the myth, and so the movie just aped that back at us. You knew from scene one that this guy will get sucked in, almost lose everything, including his life, and then turn his back on "all that." How predictable is that? Dirk Shafer, the director, has talent. You saw it in his first film, but not here.

TM: Provincetown has become a major circuit destination on Fourth of July, hasn't it?

WJM: Oh, yeah, and there are some in town who are so against it, who act as if the guys who attend are descending into some kind of Biblical plague. There are all these articles in advance of the event talking about the dangers of drug use and body fascism and everyone gets all riled up. Stories start circulating that there are all sorts of drug overdoses going on, when in reality there's been no major problems, certainly not anything worse than you see at other times of the year. There's just this pre-conceived notion that the circuit is this vast army of drug-crazed steroid zombies who want to take over the town—the entire world! But it's like anything else. It has extremes. Most folks are decent, law-abiding citizens—albeit ones that like to have a little more fun than what our puritanical society usually approves of.

TM: But in the novel, you have Jeff using his circuit partying as an escape, don't you? He's still caught up in his grief over the loss of his mentor and the breakup of his relationship with Lloyd. So he says he retreats to the dance floor to forget his troubles.

WJM: What's that old song? "I take my problems to the dance floor . . ." Well, that's my point exactly. The scene doesn't have the problem. Jeff does. Sure, he uses his clubbing and partying to avoid dealing with what's really going on. He even had a bit of a drug problem that he's pretty much kicked by the start of the novel. What happens is that the sense of community he finds on the circuit becomes the most powerful influence for him.

TM: One of the things Jeff is dealing with—or, more precisely, not dealing with—is his lingering grief over the AIDS death of his mentor, David Javitz. Tell me about that.

WJM: You know, I actually had someone say to me, "Don't you think an AIDS storyline is a bit dated? It's 2003." It's the same mentality that said the AIDS character in *The Hours* was a distraction. There's this view out there that the

crisis is over, or at least manageable, so mentioning it is passé, a real downer. You never see anything AIDS on *Will and Grace*, for example. But the truth is that even if our friends aren't dying on daily basis, many are still struggling. And for me, the most ongoing issue I still face regarding AIDS is my grief. You never hear it talked about, how we're still grieving. We lost hundreds of thousands of people and we're supposed to be over that already?

TM: I imagine writing about Javitz's death was difficult, as I know he was in many ways based on your own real-life mentor, activist Victor D'Lugin, who also lived in Provincetown.

WJM: It was hard; it was also cathartic. I never thought I'd write about it. As I said, I like ambiguities in fiction and in film, and I liked the idea that maybe Javitz, unlike Victor, had managed to survive somehow. I think it was real important that Javitz not die in *The Men from the Boys*, that he was left alive. It was a time where we needed some hope. But Javitz's death is what really transforms both Jeff and Lloyd in the new novel, and in some ways it helps transform Henry, too, who didn't even know him.

TM: Why switch to three narrators in this book? *Men from the Boys* had only Jeff. And it was first person. Now it's third person.

WJM: I'm telling a bigger, broader story here. And there's also a lot more plot. I wanted a wider angle to work with because each of the characters is individually dealing with issues that fascinate me. Self-esteem, loss, grief, anger, searching, love, deception. And it was a wonderful challenge as a writer to move into the soul and mind of characters like Lloyd who had been merely reactors to Jeff in the first book.

TM: You mention the plot, which is essentially three different narratives that weave through each other and then ultimately connect. Seems very cinematic.

WJM: Given that I write about movies in my other, nonfiction writing career, maybe that's inevitable. I do think cinematically when I'm writing. I'll start a new chapter with a line of dialogue, envisioning it as the start of a movie scene. I think readers are adapted to reading that way, too. Movies and television have so influenced the way we read and write and, again, I'm not only seeing the negatives to that. I think it has often helped writers be very crisp and precise and vibrant. I get so bored by books that rarely move outside of the protagonist's mind, where all the action is interior. I'm pulling my hair out, saying, "Somebody ring the doorbell, please! Make this person get out of his head and go do something!" Much of *Men From the Boys* took place inside Jeff's head. When you look at that book, not a lot happens. But with this new one, a lot's going on.

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TM: That's for sure. A kind of murder mystery, a mysterious fag hag, all of Henry's serio-comic adventures as an escort—in some ways, this book, for all your confrontations with grief and soul-searching, is very light-hearted. More so than your other works of fiction.

WJM: That probably reflects where I'm at in my own life right now. I'm enjoying myself. I believe that we can get so caught up in misery that we forget to have a good time. Since September 11, it's been seen as callous or insensitive—and certainly unpatriotic—to have too much fun. Remember all that talk about the death of irony? That's so ridiculous. As if all the people who died would want us to lose what makes us most human.

TIM MILLER, a solo performer artist, is the author of Shirts & Skin (Alyson Publications). He will be teaching a performance workshop August 4-8 at Castle Hill in Truro; also, under the Payomet Tent, he will perform a show based on his new book, Body Blows (University of Wisconsin Press). He can be reached through his website: <http://bometown.aol.com/millertale/tim-miller.html>.

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Two True Bohemians

Nicoletta Poli and R.D. Knudsen

BY MARGARET CARROLL-BERGMAN

Nicoletta Poli and R.D. Knudsen for the last three decades have been a hip part of the Provincetown art scene. Poli is a painter praised for her colorful and psychological renderings of dogs: interiors with dogs; landscape

with dogs; women with dogs; dogs with dogs. The couple rescues dogs and has lived with as many as a dozen at one time. Knudsen is an abstract painter as well as a guitarist for the local band, Willy and the Po' Boys, where he is known as Rick-the-Strick. The rocker and his wife own a 10-acre spread in Poor Valley, Tennessee, where they spend winters chopping firewood, hauling water, and building their dream house. In the summer in Provincetown, they live in the woods on the Tasha estate in a two-room bungalow with their dogs and cat. Poli, a tall graceful woman with Greco-Roman features, spent her childhood in Southern

Italy and looks as if she should be wearing a toga instead of the artist's uniform of jeans and sweatshirt. She reminds her husband that the abandoned infant twins, who founded Rome, were wet-nursed by a wolf. Knudsen moves with the grace of a hungry coyote and is always seen walking a pack of dogs up and down Howland Street. During a 27-inch snowstorm in January, I met with the couple at Poli's Provincetown Gallery to talk about art, dogs, and music.

PROVINCETOWN ARTS: Nicoletta, looking at the work you produced this winter, it seems you

are heading more toward a notational kind of impressionism. In one painting, two dogs running up a dune have been simplified into a black dot. Why do you paint dogs?

NICOLETTA POLI: There's a purity about dogs that I love to paint. Simple love. It doesn't take much—just letting a dog know you appreciate him. Luna is my most problematic dog because she is a big, loud talker, a pain in the ass, always yapping. Mikey, my redtick hound, is way too protective. I used to paint nudes for years with Cynthia Packard—my first 10 years of living here. Rick and I eventually moved to Tennessee during the winters and I showed my work to galleries there and was told, "We love your nudes, but we can't sell them here." My nudes were bold. So I started to paint the dogs, in everyday domestic scenes, and people responded.

PA: Is this the same Poor Valley, Tennessee, as in the country western song sung by Garth Brooks? I can't sing very well, but it goes:

Pick-up trucks and trailers and cars of every kind
With the Bailey Brother's John Deere draggin' up
behind
Roll on down Poor Valley turn right at Fisher's
Creek
There's a bonfire on Newman's Ridge soon we are
going to be
Dancin' in God's Country 30 miles from town.

R.D. KNUDSEN: Probably. Garth Brook's chief songwriter, Kim Williams, is from Poor Valley. We are out in the middle of nowhere. I bought 10 acres in '86 for a couple of grand. Garth Brooks bought 40 acres on one side of us and Kim Williams bought five acres on the other side, up the mountain.

PA: Are you subjected to endless hours of listening to country music from your famous neighbors jamming into the night?

NP: There are 20 acres between us. It is quiet. Nobody bothers us and we bother nobody. Out in the country, if we want to see someone, we have to plan to see them. Rick and I are able to paint a great deal in Tennessee and with no distractions; however, it is not the same as living in Provincetown and having a community of artists—that is why we keep coming back to Provincetown.



R.D. KNUDSEN AND
NICOLETTA POLI

COMMERCIAL STREET

PA: One dog seems to be more than enough dog. I can't imagine living with 12 shedding, smelling, drooling, flea-bitten dogs. How did you ever collect a dozen hounds?

NP: They do smell, but we brush them a lot. We first just started with Rick's dog and my dog. Our first year in Tennessee we acquired 11 dogs. We found a pregnant dog by the side of the road. People just throw their dogs away. We acquired them one by one. Then they would find us on our doorstep like Jake-the-Snake. One of my dreams is to have a lot of dogs. That is how it all got started. I had beautiful dogs everywhere laying around on the chairs and couches: dogs on the porch. Rick loves dogs, too. He has Zeke, his black lab—you never see him without that dog. The dog paintings started selling. To this day I get calls from Tennessee to ask if I am still doing dog portraits. I am! One by one the dogs died off. They got shot.

PA: Shot? Accidentally?

RDN: Shot!

NP: We don't know who did it. They just started missing, one by one. Tennessee is an extreme place. It's like living in a third world country. If you have never been to a third world country, come to Tennessee and you will have the experience.

PA: You hauled water for five years until you dug your own well. Is there a public water system where you live?

RDK: Our taxes on 10 acres are \$198.00 a year! We have town water, but it is heavily bleached. I refuse to have it around me. We have the best water in the country that comes from the mountains. However, it took me a long time before I could find a willing woman to let me drag her down to Tennessee.

PA: How did you two meet?

NP: We met by flirting.

RDK: I had been out of town for almost three years. Nicole was working at the Sea Fox Grill. I was in a band in New Haven, but came back to town to start "Stick and the Shifters."

NP: It was my first summer here.

RDK: It was your second summer. The first summer you had your affair with (voice drops).

NP: He was flirting with me and telling me to see his band and he had a girlfriend.

RDK: She wasn't my girlfriend. I met her the night before. I asked her to come and see the band, too. I asked everyone to see the band.



WILLY AND THE PO' BOYS, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: BILL EVAUL, SEBASTIAN JUNGER, JOE "BONES" BASINE, AND R.D. KNUDSEN ALIAS RICK-THE-STICK.

Nicole saw the other girl there and backed off. It wasn't until 10 years later that we got together. Anyway, we were playing at the Gifford House with a band called "Schwarz Luck and the White Girls." We were playing songs by Al Freedman, Alligator Al, who played with us. Al played with Garland Jeffreys for years. He is one of the best music arrangers in the business. He played with Tim Hardon, Lou Reed, Paul Simon, and Bob Dylan. The last time he was in town Al sat in with Willy and the Po Boys. I've known him for more than 20 years.

PA: How old is Al? His father, the painter Maurice Freedman, is having a Centennial retrospective at the Cape Museum of Fine Arts in 2004.

NP: You can't tell how old a rocker is because they are young at heart.

RDK: You can't put up walls if you play music. The problem with the guitar is that it is so hard to get that sound. To get one note crisp, you have to get blisters. It takes two or three months when you are first starting out to get over that hurdle.



ALLAN FREEDMAN AND R.D. KNUDSEN CIRCA 1975.

I love the equipment, I love the smell, and I love the feel of music.

PA: Speaking of bands, how are Willy and the Po' Boys Doing?

RDK: It looks as if we might do a video. Sebastian Junger, Billy Evaul, Jo Bones, and Peter Tarp and I. Sebastian gets the summers off and comes down here to play with the band. We were at the Beachcombers jamming one night and the people from the Squealing Pig were walking by on the street and asked us if we could play there; they

needed a band on Saturday night. That was a couple of years ago, we've been playing for the last two years every Saturday night at the Governor Bradford. Then we recorded a CD with Jingles—John Yingling—who has Spiritus Records. John and I used to own the Café Edwidge, we were partners in 1975 and the whole idea was to get enough money to get a recording studio. You know Tom Conklin? Tom used to work for Tumbleweed Records.

PA: That's right, you and John met in Oneonta. Joan Lenane, who works at the *Provincetown Banner* also went to Oneonta and so did I. I think that makes four people in town who can pronounce Oneonta!

RDK: We met in Oneonta and have been friends ever since.

PA: How did you get to Provincetown?

RDK: I was also tending bar at the Back Room in 1975, I was living with Peyton who was the disk jockey. Peyton is almost solely responsible for the disco movement in this country. The Back Room in '74 and '75 was the prototype for Studio 54. Peyton would get promotional copies of records in the mail and by the end of the night, she'd get the crowd dancing in the streets. She took the operation down to New York in '76. She later became a member of the Worcester Acting Group in New York; it had Willem Defoe and John Hurt. She worked there for years and now she lives in Arizona.

PA: Rick-the-Stick, you have an excellent memory.

NP: He can remember all the dates of all the battles in the Civil War, but he can't remember my birthday!

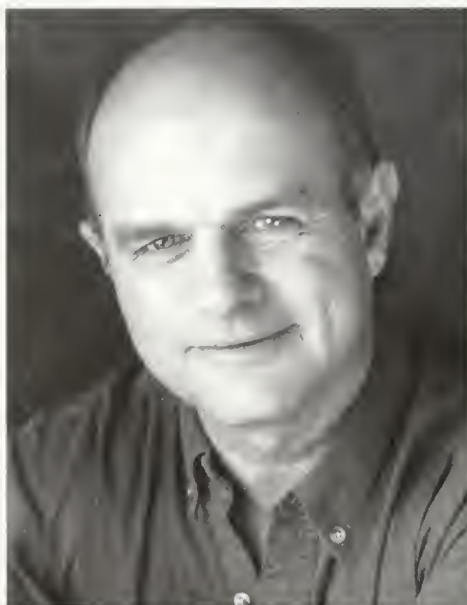
MARGARET BERGMAN'S review of the artist Rose Basile appears elsewhere in this issue.

Two Piano Players Talking about Tricks of the Trade

Paul Bisaccia & John Thomas



PAUL BISACCIA



JOHN THOMAS

Both call Provincetown home; both are performing pianists. Bisaccia's concert career has taken him to four continents and international acclaim as a Gershwin and American composer specialist; millions have seen his PBS television special Gershwin by Bisaccia. He also performs the classics of Chopin, Beethoven, Strauss, Liszt, and others. Thomas has stayed closer to home where he composes, performs his own compositions and classical repertoire, and produces concert events. Pure PolyEsther: a biblical burlesque, his collaboration with Abe Rybeck, is a Boston Theater Offensive perennial hit musical. In March the two sat down and spent a morning looking at the bay sharing the musical themes that drive them to perform.

JOHN THOMAS: What's your first memory of playing piano?

PAUL BISACCIA: I was four years old. My grandmother had a big old rambling farmhouse near Pittsfield and Tanglewood with just everything you'd expect: an old-fashioned fireplace, a wood stove, and a big old upright in the parlor. It was the first time I ever saw a piano, and I fell in love with it immediately. I sat down and just banged away. Then my parents got me a little toy piano with a bench. It was about three octaves and sounded like

bells. I would pretend to play, but it was really gobbledygook. I would sing, screaming out at the top of my lungs. I played it non-stop in my own little way until the whole thing fell apart. I just wore it entirely out!

JT: The first piano I remember was a spinet that my grandmother had at her home on a street of row houses. I was about four years old too, and I remember making up stuff. It was probably the closest I ever came to 12-tone music, because I don't really enjoy playing that now. So I'd bang notes on the bottom, pretending that the giant ants were coming, and then add high tones. It was creepy and weird, but fun.

PB: I loved to invent at the piano.

JT: I started piano lessons at the age of eight.

PB: I started at seven.

JT: What were your teachers like?

PB: I had a really weird musical upbringing. I don't think my earlier teachers knew enough to take care of somebody who had a real interest and needed expert guidance. I began to get so bored that I finally just quit and taught myself. When I was in second grade, I had a record of Andre Watts playing Liszt's first

piano concerto. I'm the only kid who ever brought a Liszt record into show and tell. I loved the piece. And I was quite surprised when I realized you could buy sheet music, which I had thought was under lock and key only for people who passed the correct exams. Not having any real technical knowledge, I slogged away at it and worked out the fingering and made it up as I went along. You learn a lot about piano playing when you force yourself to play something and are determined to play it. And I was. I began taking lessons with a lady who had a marvelous sense of musicality and excitement about music. She gave me freedom to express myself, which is good for kids at a certain age. She taught me a lot about chords and improvising. When I was a junior in high school I wanted to be a marine biologist. But then I realized I was in love with biology because of the romance of it, and I figured piano was more romantic and fun in the long run. So I switched and my guidance counselor said, "You can't make a living at it. Don't do it." But my parents were very supportive. In my senior year I studied with the head of the piano department at Hartt School; he was a genius at the piano. His piano playing was beautiful, gorgeous, and organically connected. I was a student of Raymond Hanson and his wife Ann Koscielnny. Their friend, a Brazilian pianist named Luiz de Moura Castro, became my mentor for more than 10 years. All of them are excellent teachers. The unorthodox way I was brought up was a miracle upon miracles. It gave me many ways to look at music that were different from most people, and I think that's really helped me. I never thought in the box.

JT: I had the opposite path. I started with an excellent teacher named Evelyn Worst, and she's still alive. She taught my father when he was a child and his two sisters. She is an amazing woman with great spirit. She had a studio with two pianos and an organ in a very long parlor room.

PB: So you had a very logical progression of studies.

JT: Yes, until I went to Boston University, when I began to teach myself piano. I learned folk styles like Joni Mitchell and Jackson Browne. The movie *The Sting* had come out, and it took me two or three months to learn my first ragtime song, with that simple left hand and the impossible right hand syncopation.

PB: Which one was it?

JT: It was Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag."

PB: That's one of the hardest ones for the hands to negotiate comfortably because it doesn't fit them exactly right to do it really well. You have to think about it. It's not just one of those pieces you can sit down and sight-read.

JT: It was a whole new style I was trying to break into, and it was like learning to rub your belly and pat your head at the same time. I remember one night in December when it all clicked. It was a radical moment. Once you get the pattern, you can ragtime anything. Of course I went home for Christmas and shocked my Grandmother. I was ragtiming hymns. She wasn't into that. Once I got into the ragtime, I discovered Dr. John and the New Orleans style of piano playing. I loved that because it's more syncopated and complex. It's based on the second line rhythms that were invented by kids following alongside the marching bands.

PB: That's fascinating. I used to play in a marching band. I played tuba and Sousaphone in the back. Those percussion guys always had great rhythms.

JT: And they are completely integrated with all that Gershwin music you do. How did you get into that?

PB: Part of it was playing the club dates beginning in my last year at Hartt School. As you know, a lot of things happen just on the spur of the moment when somebody needs a pianist for a gig. I was asked to accompany a weekend cabaret show at a pub, and I didn't know the music, so I faked a lot of it. I probably murdered it, but it worked. I was very proud of myself. A few weeks later I got a call from the head of a hotel who asked me to start performing on my own. I just played what I wanted to, and it was a success. I was being paid to practice. I played four hours a night and got 50 bucks and all you could eat, which was pretty good in 1978. The food was really good, and believe me, I could eat a lot back then. I played there six nights a week for three years. I played through a ton of music. What a great way to learn repertoire.

JT: I performed for about four months at the Napoleon Club in Boston in 1999, right before it closed. You had to know hundreds of songs. I was replacing a woman who was going on tour with one of those Italian wedding interactive shows, and she was kind enough to copy her entire book that she'd assembled over two years of specific songs that the regular customers liked. So I just showed up and learned them on the spot. I learned about 500 songs at that gig.

PB: After I graduated from Hartt, I rented a little flat in what was the oldest apartment building in the nation. It was ancient but quite elegant

with glorious hallways. Every room in the building had a working fireplace. The apartment cost \$139 a month, and here I was making what I thought was a fortune, plus free parking, and all I could eat, and teaching students and preparing concerts. I felt like I was in heaven. The apartment building was filled with little old ladies and artists. Lots of Hartford Symphony players and ballet dancers lived there, and nearly everybody owned a piano. It was a marvelous place, and no one minded my practicing, except for the music critic for one of the local papers. He worked all night long and slept all day. Luckily I wasn't getting reviewed yet, because he would have given me a terrible one.

JT: That's the beauty about creating your own press package. You can be selective about the articles you copy. Nobody says you have to keep all of them.

PB: One day I was practicing with a soprano, and she was hitting the high notes in some big arias. At the height of one of them, there was a cannon shot at my door. It was the music critic with a rake, and he yelled, "Find a practice room! Don't sing any more!" It was the talk of the building the next day.

JT: Did he leave any rake marks on the door?

PB: Yes, there were little chips all around. After that, the landlord said, "Paul stays, the critic leaves."

JT: Tell me about your strangest concert gig.

PB: It was at a recital in the summer in a library, and the air conditioning had failed. It was getting up to about 90 degrees; some people were about to faint. A friend and I were playing, the last piece on the program, and were into the last movement of a Franck sonata for violin and piano, which has a place for me to stop playing the piano. I felt a little bit of drip form on my nose, so I grabbed my handkerchief and wiped it and noticed that it was red. I had a nosebleed.

JT: Very Song to Remember. Very '50s movies!

PB: So I'm thinking, "Oh my, I'm going to bleed all over." What was I going to do with another eight minutes to go? So I looked upward and sniffed away and played the rest of the concert looking up to the ceiling. People came back stage afterwards and said, "You were so inspired! You were looking up at the ceiling not even looking at the music!" Here they thought it was one of the great, inspired concerts of a lifetime. So I showed them my handkerchief and said, "I had a nosebleed. I simply didn't want to bleed on the piano keys."

JT: Ah, the tricks of the trade.



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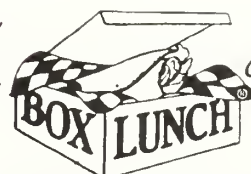


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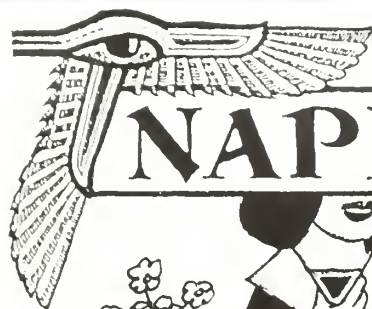
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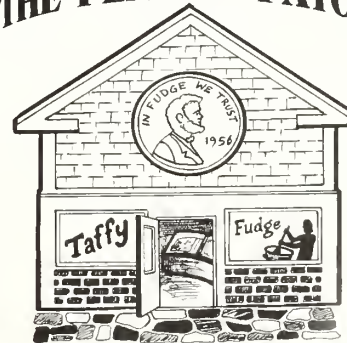
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